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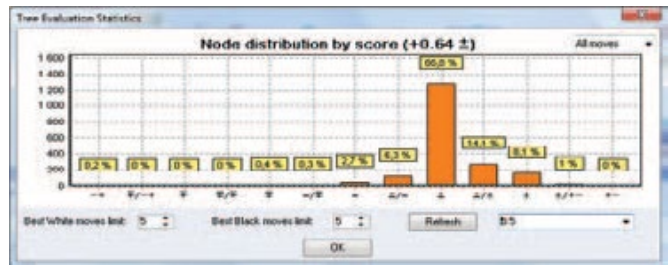

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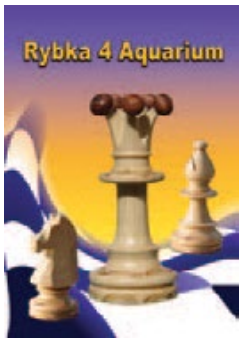

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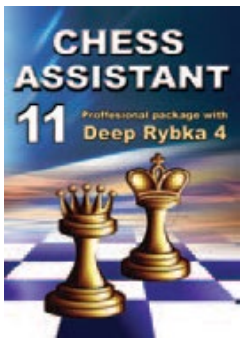

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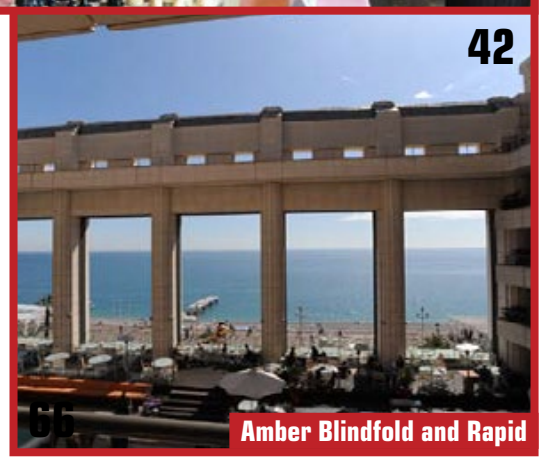
2010 Issue 3

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland **EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman



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On March 27, three days after his 89th birthday, Vasily Smyslov, the seventh World Champion, died in Moscow. In a first reaction Vladimir Kramnik said: 'Smyslov was no less a player than Tal or Petrosian. Even no less, I would say, than Fischer. Fischer was a brighter star, but Smyslov shone much longer. In my opinion he is the best player for young kids to study. His games are so clean and clear.'

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In a highly personal tribute, Genna Sosonko remembers his many walks and long, long conversations with Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov. 'When I associated closely with him at a tournament in Brazil in 1977, he was 56, and it didn't occur to me that I would write about him one day – we just felt like kindred spirits.'

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'Hungry and shivering from the cold, the cat wandered into the Smyslovs' dacha in the winter of 2004-05. It stayed there and became the darling of the seventh world championship and his spouse.' A little tale by Oleg Pervakov, the editor of Vasily Smyslov's collected studies.

24 Ten Full-Blooded Games
He had not come to win. His aim was to enjoy himself, to gauge his current form in view of the upcoming world championship match, to try some new openings. And to play ten full-blooded games. Well, full-blooded they certainly were. Veselin Topalov's play was far from impeccable and more than once his fate hung by a thread, but after he had ground down Boris Gelfand in a breathtaking last-round effort the consensus was that a great fighter had deservedly won his first Linares trophy and the €75,000 winner's cheque.

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The 19th Amber Blindfold and Rapid tournament in Nice started with a bang when on the opening day Vasily Ivanchuk, the winner of the very first Amber tournament back in 1992, defeated this year's top-seed Magnus Carlsen 2-0. Who could have expected at this point that these two players would be locked in a captivating race that would remain exciting till the very last moment?

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PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Boris Dolmatovsky, Zeljka Malobabic, '64'
COVER PHOTO
Vasily Smyslov: Corbis

Election Time

Only months from now, coming September at the 39th Olympiad, a new FIDE President will be elected. Or at least there is a chance that a new President will be elected, for the current one, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov from Kalmykia, would not mind another term and is running too. When the 2010 Chess Olympiad was awarded to the Siberian town of Khanty-Mansiysk in Turin four years ago, the cognoscenti did not fail to point out that this choice practically secured Ilyumzhinov of a further term. After all, who would stand a chance against him if the elections were held on Russian soil? You may draw your own conclusions as to what they exactly meant to say, but we can confirm that this sentiment was widespread at the time, and remained the common opinion until, in mid-March of this year, 12th World Champion Anatoly Karpov announced that he would challenge Ilyumzhinov in the presidential elections. Karpov laments the sorry state chess is in after years of mismanagement and vows to use his fame and experience to make chess a healthy sport again.

Now that makes things less clear, as for Karpov, as a Russian, Khanty-Mansiysk may feel like his home-ground, too. Much seems to depend on the position the Russian Chess Federation will adopt. For the moment they have postponed their decision, but our gut feeling tells us that they may go for Karpov. To begin with he is more 'Russian' than his opponent, and secondly it seems unlikely that a seasoned politician like Karpov would announce his candidacy if he hadn't guaranteed himself of the required political support.

But then one never knows with Ilyumzhinov. The FIDE presidency is of enormous importance

NEW IN CHESS

Anatoly Karpov: the next FIDE President? (Yes, we Caro-Kann!)

for his business activities and international contacts, and he will do all he can to keep it. For the moment our first concern is for the elections to be fair, although this may be a silly sentiment when you're talking about FIDE matters. Who doesn't remember the open and shameless bribing and buying of votes by Ilyumzhinov and his team in Turin? And that's just one example of the corrupt and totally unacceptable practices that have been witnessed at FIDE elections through the years.

Vox Una Sumus

As the two candidates are explaining to the world why they should be elected, the first demonstrations of support are already being published. These statements, often phrased in weighty words and rambling sentences, make for interesting reading. For example, even if they don't have any votes (it's countries that vote at the election, not continents), four continental presidents have expressed their support for Ilyumzhinov. In his open letter Boris Kutin, Continental President of Europe, carefully put it this way: 'During the 15 years of your presidency we have worked together on many projects towards the further development and progress of our beloved sport. Our co-operation has been fruitful to the greatest extent and it has played a big positive role in the current healthy situation and financial stability of FIDE.' On the other hand, his African colleague Dabilani Buthali sums up his experience as follows: 'During the 15 years of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's presidency of FIDE we have worked together on many projects towards the further development and progress of our beloved sport. Our co-operation with Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has been fruitful to the greatest extent and it has played a big positive role in the current healthy situation and financial stability of FIDE.' Indeed, you can't say they don't stand united!

Millions and Billions

One of the most outspoken supporters of Ilyumzhinov is the President of the Turkish Chess Federation, Ali Nihat Yazici. That may sound strange for those who remember how fiercely Mr Nihat, as a member of Bessel Kok's ticket, attacked the same Ilyumzhinov in the previous presidential elections in Turin. However, in the past years the two have gotten to know each other better, as Mr Nihat explained, and he now holds his former foe in high esteem ('Previously I knew him very little, but in the last three years he has stolen my heart'). That's what we like about politics, the way it brings people together. You talk to your opponent for a while and suddenly you're friends. In a lengthy letter Mr Nihat (who has

never made a secret of the fact that he hopes to be FIDE president himself one day and who is currently running for President of the European Chess Union), paints a rosy, almost fairytale-like picture of the state chess is currently in. A picture that must have had many

TCF President Ali Nihat Yazici now supports Kirsan Ilyumzhinov.

chess professionals roll off their chairs laughing (or crying). Here are some (literal) excerpts: 'The situation of World chess today is in a fantastic condition compared to 15 years ago.' 'All FIDE tournaments are today organized in excellent conditions, with well paid prize funds (…).' 'FIDE is able to find prizes, sponsors and venues, far in excess of the events we had in the 80s or 90s.'

Also remarkable is the claim 'Mr. President has spent more than 50 million USD from his personal pocket for FIDE during his presidency of over 15 years.' Has he? Or did he once say that he would and did the project then kind of fade away? Or is Mr Nihat referring to the plan that Ilyumzhinov announced in 2007, when he said that FIDE was going to build 150 hotels, all in the shape of chess pieces (naturally)? But in that case he should be more precise, as the total cost for that project, according to Ilyumzhinov, was not 50 million dollars, but 50 *billion*. Lately we have not heard much about this truly ambitious undertaking, but there's still time, as the construction was expected to take about four years. The first hotel complexes were going to arise in Chisinau, China and Russian cities such as Samara, Yekaterinburg and Khanty-Mansiysk. Soon a representative part of the chess community will be in the latter town. Let's hope they send home pictures!

First Chess in Space

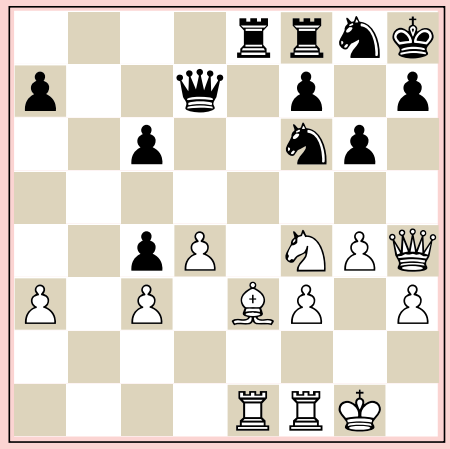
On April 5, Vitaly Sevastianov passed away at the age of 74. Sevastianov was not only Chairman of the Soviet Chess Federation twice, from 1977-1986 and from 1988-1989, but also a cosmonaut who made two flights into space (and therefore was a two-time Hero of the Soviet Union). During his first flight, in 1970, Sevastianov and his colleague Andrian Nikolaev played a much

Vitaly Sevastianov in his cosmonaut years.

publicized game of chess against two members of the Ground Control team, Nikolay Kamanin and Viktor Gorbatko. They were no mean players, as the game shows.

QG 1.3 – D20
Soyuz 9
Ground Control
Outer space / Earth 1970

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 e5 4.♗xc4 exd4 5.exd4 ♘c6 6.♗e3 ♗d6 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗f5 11.♘h4 ♕d7 12.♕f3 ♘e7 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♖ae1 ♔h8 15.♗g5 ♘eg8 16.♘g2 ♖ae8 17.♗e3 ♗b4 18.a3 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 ♗e4 20.♕g3 c6 21.f3 ♗d5 22.♗d3 b5 23.♕h4 g6 24.♘f4 ♗c4 25.♗xc4 bxc4



26.♗d2 At this point White could have played 26.d5!, creating space for the bishop on d4, with promising attacking chances. **26...♖xe1 27.♖xe1 ♘d5 28.g5 ♕d6 29.♘xd5 cxd5 30.♗f4 ♕d8 31.♗e5+ f6 32.gxf6 ♘xf6 33.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 34.♖e8+ ♕xe8 35.♕xf6+ ♔g8** Draw.

COLOPHON

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland
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ART-DIRECTION: Steven Boland
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SALES AND ADVERTISING: Casper Pieters

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BIC: ABNANL2A in favour of Interchess BV, Alkmaar, The Netherlands

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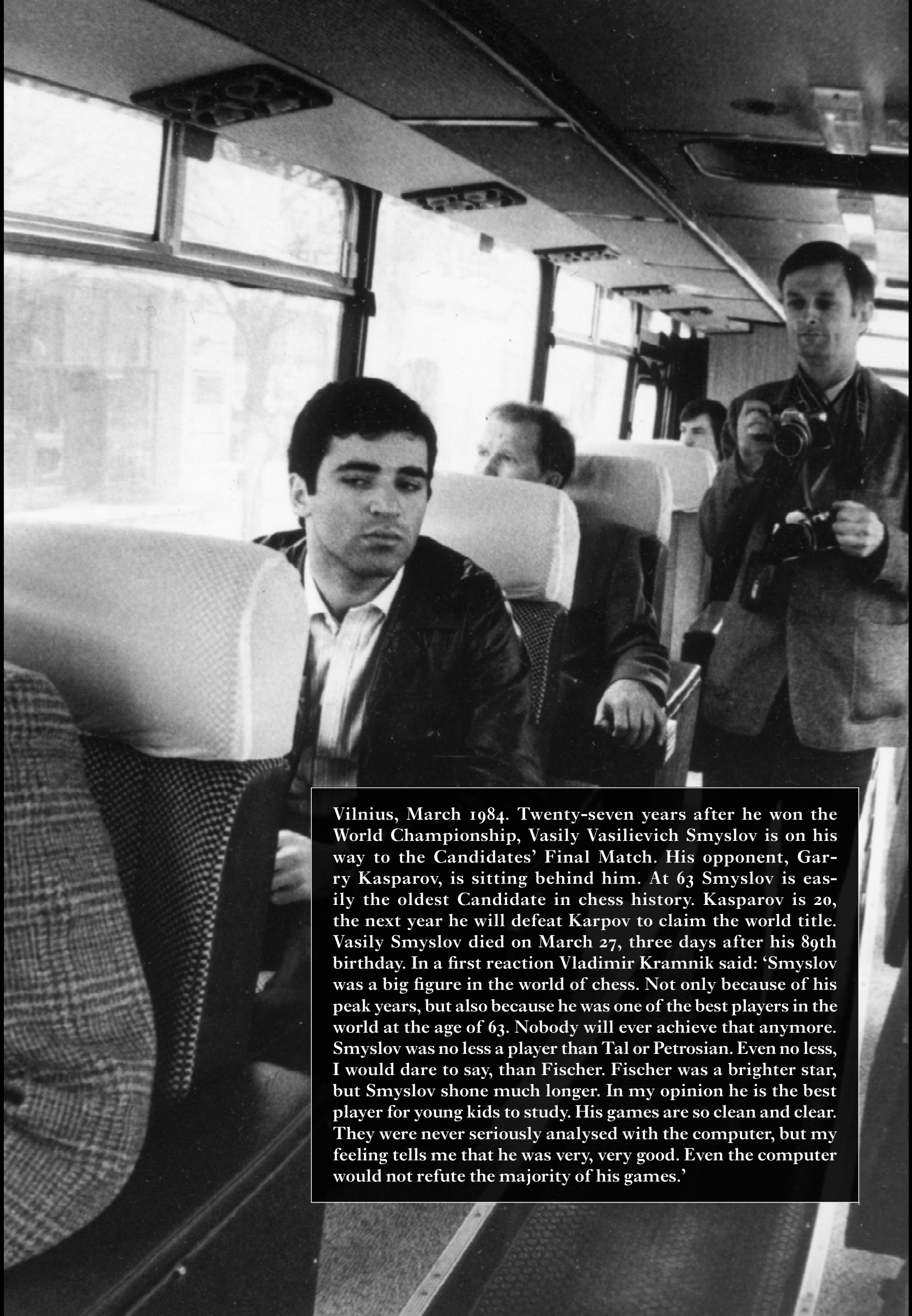
Vasily Smyslov 1921–2010



Vilnius, March 1984. Twenty-seven years after he won the World Championship, Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov is on his way to the Candidates' Final Match. His opponent, Garry Kasparov, is sitting behind him. At 63 Smyslov is easily the oldest Candidate in chess history. Kasparov is 20, the next year he will defeat Karpov to claim the world title. Vasily Smyslov died on March 27, three days after his 89th birthday. In a first reaction Vladimir Kramnik said: 'Smyslov was a big figure in the world of chess. Not only because of his peak years, but also because he was one of the best players in the world at the age of 63. Nobody will ever achieve that anymore. Smyslov was no less a player than Tal or Petrosian. Even no less, I would dare to say, than Fischer. Fischer was a brighter star, but Smyslov shone much longer. In my opinion he is the best player for young kids to study. His games are so clean and clear. They were never seriously analysed with the computer, but my feeling tells me that he was very, very good. Even the computer would not refute the majority of his games.'

Death, where is thy sting?

Genna Sosonko remembers 7th World Champion Vasily Smyslov

At Tilburg in 1992, having reached his eighth decade, Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov went through three rounds of the knock-out tournament, beating strong, experienced grandmasters. And he only lost to Evgeny Sveshnikov after a tough battle in the sixth game of the fourth round. The next day he was going back to Moscow. When I came down for breakfast it was eight o'clock. The dining hall was empty and only Smyslov sat alone in the centre of it at a big, round table.

'I knew you'd come, Genna, sit down... I haven't slept since five. I was tormented at first – what made an old idiot play the Pirc in the last game...? And then I started thinking about my age, and it just seemed unreal. How can I be 71 years old? How can this be possible? Then I remembered going on holiday to Sevastopol with my father and mother. It was like yesterday, but in fact it was the summer of 1928... You wouldn't believe it, Genna, but since then I've never been to the Crimea again. I've been to Argentina, Iceland, the Philippines, I've been everywhere, except to the Crimea... And then I started going over my life... Ah, if Mother Volga could flow back and then, if we could start to live our lives again (a line from a Russian poem and song). Then I thought, but how? How would I have lived? Probably exactly the same way... And then I asked myself, so when were you happiest in life? Do you know when it was? At the house of pioneers in prewar Moscow. As I see it now, Abram Isaakovich Rabinovich is going through a game, and we, five or six little boys bunched around a table, are saying, it's better if Black goes here. And he says, how's it better, what do you know, you little nitwits? Then a flash of hands begins, we're all trying to make our moves. He goes here, and we tell him – there, he – here, we – there... And he's tapping everyone with the pieces, and he's saying, move, little nitwits, what do you know about chess?

'Then I decided to read something, I took the Bible from the table. And you know what I thought, Genna: the Bible will be longer in English than in Russian. Is that possible?' 'I don't think so, Vasily Vasilievich, how did you decide that?' 'I was thinking, what else did I want to ask? What is *zhalo* in English? It's 'sting', isn't that right?' 'Yes, why do you ask?' 'I guessed it myself when I was reading at night, "Death, where is thy sting?"'

'Then again, why am I bothering you so early in the morning? Let's go, let's go, let's get something from the table, fill up with victuals. Now we'll eat some Dutch cheese, and we won't skimp on the ham either. What did you say to me about calories at the time?'

Going over to the table, the first thing he did was to drain a glass of juice in one gulp and immediately refill it. Throwing his head back, he took another gulp and inhaled: 'And later, Genna, you'll write that Smyslov didn't count the calories, and drank a ridiculous amount of juice in the mornings.'

And adjusting his glasses that had slipped down, smiling his wonderful smile: 'You won't get anything mixed up, Genna? You'll write it all down? You won't forget?'

'I won't forget, Vasily Vasilievich.'

Ten years earlier, in Tilburg in 1982, I defeated Vasily Smyslov at the Interpolis tournament. Up until then all my games with him had ended in a draw. Vasily Vasilievich rose from his seat and extended his hand to me, saying: 'You can be pleased, Genna, but don't be too proud, I can't play against my friends.'

One month before the start of that Interpolis tournament, I happened to be in Leningrad. As I walked into the Chigorin Club, I casually remarked, 'These doors are so dilapidated, when are you going to do some repairs? It's a disgrace.' The details of the story became hazy. After my visit it was rumoured that Sosonko had promised to give $10,000 to renovate the club.

Vasily Smyslov going for a stroll outside his dacha with his wife Nadezhda. ‘She was simply a part of him.’

After he had lost our game Smyslov grumbled: 'This guy? He'd kill his own father for $500, there isn't a chance he'd give up $10,000. You'll see.' He even pouted for a few days. But then everything went back to normal: the daily walks together around little Oisterwijk, where the participants in the Interpolis tournament lived, and long, long conversations about everything.

When I lived in the Soviet Union we exchanged a few words in the press centre of some tournament, but I only really got to know Smyslov in the Western

'64' MAGAZINE

Moscow 1957. Vasily Smyslov is crowned World Champion after he has defeated Mikhail Botvinnik 12½-9½ (+6, = 13, –3).

portion of my life. I asked him once, 'Vasily Vasilievich, when did we get to know each other?' 'What are you asking, Genna?' – Smyslov looked at me reproachfully – 'You're well aware that we've known each other our whole lives.'

We'd met innumerable times: in Switzerland, France, Brazil, Argentina, Yugoslavia... And, of course, in Moscow, at his home and his dacha, and at my place in Amsterdam. The day before he left for the hospital from which he would not return, we spoke on the telephone. When I associated closely with him at a tournament in Brazil in 1977, he was 56, and it didn't occur to me that I would write about him one day – we just felt like kindred spirits.

Like most people, Smyslov was more interesting and intriguing in private conversations than in interviews and publications. He was restrained by the thoughts that were always under the surface: will this reflect on my trips abroad? How will the bosses see this? What will this one or that one think about it? That's why all the interviews with him, even in the most recent period, when he became more uninhibited and allowed himself to reveal more than in the Soviet era, seem flavourless to me.

His monologues were so interesting and sincere that I began to catch myself thinking, don't forget this, this should be preserved, that could be interesting, and not only to me. From a certain point I started making notes on the most interesting things he'd said. In the latter years I also did this during our telephone conversations.

I think that he himself understood the point of my questions and prepared for some of them, or, at least, tried to formulate his thoughts precisely and unambiguously. Having seen us together constantly, going for walks and having conversations, a colleague once asked, 'Was Vasily Vasilievich completely open with you?' I think that he was more open with me than with others, but who can answer such a question?

He was open only with his wife, of course, Nadezhda Andreevna, Nadyusha, Nadine, but that wasn't openness, but something else: can you be open with your own right hand? She was simply a part of him, and when I talked to him on the phone her voice could always be heard in the background, reflecting his own thoughts and reflexes. And wherever he went, when he entered a hotel room, the first thing he did was to take a photograph of a smiling young Nadia Smyslova out of his suitcase and put it on his bedside table.

He told me things that usually aren't talked about. And not only because it was me. It's just that everything was aligned harmoniously: you didn't have to watch your words here when you were talking to a fellow countryman. You didn't have to torment yourself by mispronouncing English or German words. Moreover, the experience of a person who had lived for almost three decades in the country where he lived made things that not a single foreigner could understand perfectly clear. And finally, a person from the same field, the same profession, whose interests in no way conflicted with his own. That was a lot!

He was constantly and passionately enthusiastic about something. In the late forties and early fifties this was contacting the dead, spiritualism, which, according to him, was a pastime of quite a few people in the upper echelons of power. He knew many of them personally. With me he had a period when he only talked about the light at the end of the tunnel and almost all his monologues began with the words, 'but in the book *Life after Life* it says that...' Then he got keen on sculptures and images of idols and gods. This period began for him after his visit to Iceland in 1977, didn't last very long, and ended when he suddenly became disillusioned with them and threw them all away, wanting to forget all about them.

I also encountered his period of enthusiasm for UFOs, mysterious phenomena, and aliens who visited Earth from time to time, and the irrefutable proof of this. At the Interpolis tournament in Tilburg in 1979 he only talked about flying saucers, and when Oleg Romanishin allowed himself to make some kind of ironic remark on this subject, he became genuinely angry.

After a trip to the Philippines, having seen how the local medicine men removed tumours without any anaesthetic, he was very impressed by this, but that interest passed later, too. In July 1999 a new theme popped up in his monologues: 'You know what dates are coming soon, Genna? Yes, exactly! The prophecies of Nostradamus! Nostradamus predicted many things correctly...' But as soon as all the momentous dates had passed, the topic of conversation also disappeared.

Religion trumped everything else. This often happens, especially in the years when the last port of call is becoming clearly visible. He himself said that he was a believer, albeit secretly, from a young age, and religion was an unavoidable subject of our conversations. He wore a cross on a gold chain, and during our walks, if there was an opportunity, he would go into a church, light a candle, and cross himself in front of the icons.

One day I said to him, 'Can Scripture really survive a confrontation with self-evident truths?' He frowned: 'Genna, you read all the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, but instead of that the right thing to do would be to go to a church, or at least a synagogue.'

But he was favourably disposed towards me and allowed me to express views that didn't coincide with his own, on condition that I didn't express them very often and didn't ask questions that were too difficult.

He was known for his great passion for music and his fine voice. Before he made the first record of his life in Holland, together with a local choir, he was very nervous. In the morning he went to the church in Tilburg and prayed for a long time, and when he came back from the studio he told me, 'Genna, you wouldn't believe it, Mother Mary winked at me, as if to say, come on, don't be afraid, everything's going to be fine, so, you know, I was even relieved.'

'64' MAGAZINE

Applauded by enthusiastic fans, the seventh World Champion and his wife get into a limousine that is waiting for them.

One day he told me: 'In Reykjavik in '77 I was Spassky's second for his match with Hort, and we were invited to a reception at the Soviet embassy. I don't remember what the conversation was about, but Boris Vasilievich told the Soviet ambassador ironically, our Vasily Vasilievich believes in God... The ambassador and especially his wife flew into a real temper – what's this rubbish, it's complete obscurantism, priest-worshipping, and they ask me, is it true? And I say, it's true, it's all true.'

In Elista in August 1998 I had some theological disputes with Maia Chiburdanidze and her spiritual mentor, Father Raphael. As we were saying goodbye he asked me, 'If someone's best friend betrayed him, and his friend begged him on his deathbed – will he be forgiven?' The next day I saw Smyslov in Moscow

and readdressed Father Raphael's question to him. He didn't think about it for long: 'It will be decided in the next world!' He resorted to this undoubtedly correct answer on more than one occasion, and not only when religious problems were being discussed.

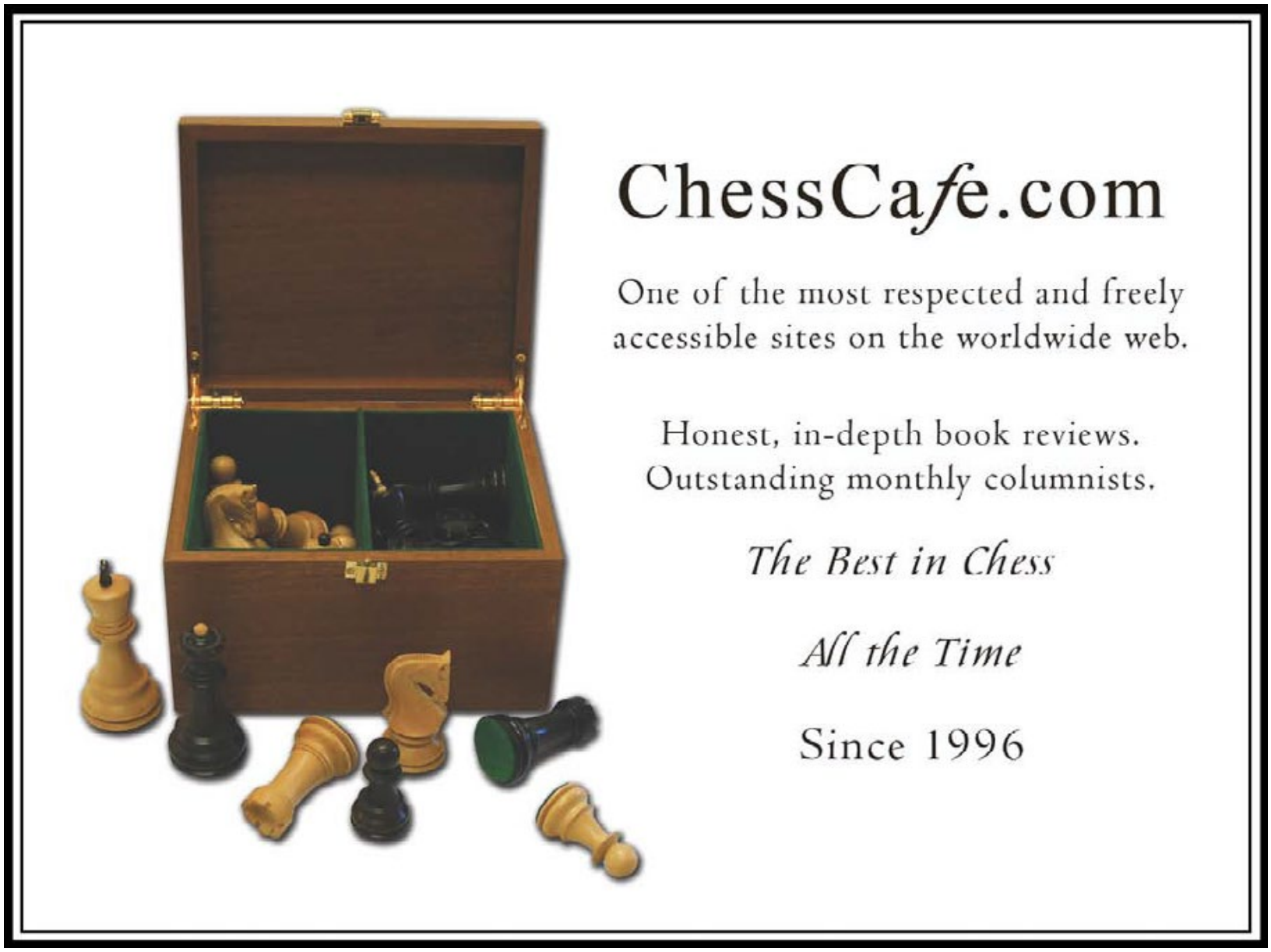
Like many Russians, he had a very noticeable admiration for foreigners, he went into raptures at the quality of their products, the service in restaurants, customer service in general, and the way people related to each other, and would tease ironically, and sometimes also contemptuously, about all this. These were contradictory impulses, it would seem at first, but in fact they complement each other very potently.

Everyone who came from the Soviet Union had the easily-explicable shopping syndrome, and there were no exceptions here. But Smyslov would repeatedly exchange things that he had just bought. After examining his new acquisition, and sometimes after a discussion of all aspects of it with his colleagues, he ceremoniously brought his purchase back to the shop the next day to exchange it or get his money back.

I don't know when this syndrome began to manifest itself in him, but in the mid-seventies it was already a chronic ailment that didn't respond to treatment. I think that when he first managed to exchange something at a shop painlessly he wanted to experience this feeling sensually more and more often, and later all the time. Like any alcoholic he didn't consider it a disease, but tried to recall occasions when he'd bought something and kept it, or simply claimed that he could easily get by without exchanging anything.

'Let's go for a walk, Genna, but first let's stop in a shop and buy a blouse for Nadezhda Andreevna, and then we'll go wherever you say,' he suggested before our traditional walk in Tilburg. 'No thanks, you buy it yourself, I'll wait outside, and tomorrow I'll go with you to exchange it.' He laughed...

Another time we exchanged a blouse that had already been exchanged the previous day, but in the end Vasily Vasilievich didn't like it because the style was too free. 'Do you really like it, Genna?' he asked me in the same tone of voice he'd had the day before in the same shop. And sighing, he added: 'I'm really going to catch it at home. You know, once I was playing in Switzerland, and I chose a blouse for Nadezhda Andreevna that she completely hated... And it turned out that two months later I was Spassky's second in Geneva, when he was playing Portisch. I went into a department store, good heavens, I was dazzled, and can you imagine, Genna, out of all the styles and colours I chose exactly the same blouse as the last time...'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Walking around Tilburg we went into one bank and then another. 'We have to find a good one, Genna...' He had brought 90 Norwegian krone with him from Moscow in small notes (something around $30 then), and wanted to exchange them 'at the very best rate'. When I advised him to solve the problem at the first bank we came to and spend the money, he justified himself: 'I just don't want to pay them criminal commissions.'

I could literally count the number of times I saw him angry. I remember one case very well: it was May 13, 1981. The IBM tournament was being played in Amsterdam, and we went out for our evening walk as usual. I said that there had been an assassination attempt on the Pope in Rome, but he was alive, and they'd caught the shooter. 'They caught him? That kind of villain should immediately be hanged in public in St. Peter's Square, to teach others a lesson. And not just hanged, but by the balls...'

Vasily Smyslov and Genna Sosonko in Tilburg in 1982. 'You won't get anything mixed up, Genna? You'll write it all down? You won't forget?'

Spoiled by Western democracy, I groaned and started to say something about a trial, the right to a defence... He didn't let me finish: 'Genna, I would hang that scoundrel by his balls and do it all without hesitation, without any of your trials or defences...'

When he was abroad he behaved cautiously, and always knew what to say, whom to say it to, and how to reply. 'Genna, remember the Nice Olympiad in '74, it was a wonderful time... One day I was sitting in a restaurant in the evening, and Simone Signoret was at the next table, she had a villa somewhere around there. It was suggested to me, she's a famous actress, she's world renowned, don't you want to get her autograph? Well, I don't particularly go after autographs, but I was thinking, a famous actress... I went up to her and I was introduced to her. Simone Signoret narrowed her eyes, gave me a searching look, and said, "Why don't you like Yves Montand [Signoret's husband] over there in the Soviet Union?" I replied, "I don't know, I'm not a politician, I'm just a chess player." Simone Signoret gave me her autograph, and when we got back to our table, two bottles of champagne were already standing there, and the best quality too – a gift from her, that meant.'

In 1977 we were both playing in Brazil. Walking through Sao Paulo, we often came to a Russian bookshop, but Smyslov was rather afraid of going in, who knew who might see him? He waited for me on a bench in a square while I dug through books that were banned in the USSR at that time.

Before the rest day I gave him *The Gulag Archipelago*. I met him in the morning in the hotel lobby – Smyslov was waiting for some employees of the Soviet trade representation to go with them to some shop for super-cheap leather products. 'Oh, Genna, what have you done to me, I didn't sleep until five. I was reading and reading. I remembered exactly how it was back then, Solzhenitsyn describes it all faithfully. My father was also a specialist, he graduated from the Technological Institute in St. Petersburg, back when it was called that... And his colleagues were arrested in Moscow and in Petersburg in the thirties. He tried to protect me from everything, but I wasn't a little boy any more, and if I didn't understand everything, I guessed some of it.' And closing his eyes, he put his hand to his head.

'Here they are... They're coming... They're coming, the scoundrels' – Smyslov had already noticed the middle-aged men, all looking alike, coming through the revolving doors. 'Hello, hello,' Vasily Vasilievich greeted them, standing up and smiling. 'Glad to see you! And where is Nikanor Ivanovich, now? He couldn't make it? What a nuisance...'

He always avoided saying the name Lenin, even in the Soviet era. He would even say 'When I was playing in the national championship in Petersburg in 1961', using the pre-Soviet name of Leningrad. He called Lenin 'the Antichrist', whose embalmed corpse should have been taken out of Red Square a long time ago.

During the Candidates' tournament in Montpellier in 1985 we met a few blocks from the hotel, as always: a ridiculous number of people were 'accompanying' the Soviet grandmasters on this occasion, and we didn't know who might see us together. At breakfast on the last day he whispered, 'In half an hour at the usual place?'

'Genna, I got hold of a little book for you,' Smyslov began without any ado. 'You've pampered me with all those books, and now I'm making a reciprocal move: a local Russian resident presented this to me at the start of the tournament. There's no way I can take it with me to Moscow.' He took it from his bosom and handed me the paperback book: Dante's *Inferno*.

'If I may, Vasily Vasilievich, Dante has also been published in the Soviet Union. Dante was a dissident, of course, and they banished him from his homeland, but think about it, that was six centuries ago.' 'You've made all your jokes, Gennady Borisovich, but you should have a look at what's written underneath. Have a look, have a look.' 'It says YMCA, the name of a Christian publishing company, so what?' 'It's "so what" to you, but if a customs officer opens it and asks me, where did you buy this book? What should I say? That's what this is about. So accept Dante as a present and don't argue. Let it be on your shelf at home in Amsterdam.'

Amsterdam. August 1994. He arrived to play in the Donner Memorial. I met him at the airport. He didn't have any suitcases, but he was carrying a small bag. 'What do I need? What laptop, what are you talking about, it's all in the hands of the gods...' I came to watch every day, we often ate dinner together, and once we set off on foot straight from the tournament hall to my home. As we were approaching my house, adjusting his glasses with his characteristic gesture, he leant forwards: 'I'll tell you a certain recipe, Genna. But you should use it if you're seriously ill, if the doctors have said there's no hope. It's an Indian recipe, it's been tested.'

'Don't keep me waiting, Vasily Vasilievich, what's this recipe, come on, tell me.' He stopped and stared into my eyes, and said solemnly: 'You have to drink urine!' 'What do you mean, urine?' 'That's it! Your own! And 14 days in a row, because if you don't do it for that long, it won't work. The organism can't fix itself and there won't be any benefit.'

He not only had absolute faith in what was said on television, on the radio and in print, but also feared, and even dreaded it. 'You wrote well about Misha Tal, Genna, it's all correct. But so openly, in such a Western style, maybe it was all like that, but I don't even know... it's too European.'

'You're playing Bronstein tomorrow, Vasily Vasilievich, do you remember your first game with him?' 'I don't remember that, I only remember that in '40 Yudovich sent me a game between two Ukrainian players who had achieved their master norms, and he asked me to give him a conclusion – were they worthy of the title? I myself had only just turned 19, although I was a member of the qualifications commission, as in those days everyone was obliged to do their social duty. I looked through the game and gave

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An accomplished singer, Vasily Smyslov recorded several CD's, but his public performances were mainly limited to the official parts of chess events. On this occasion he is accompanied on the piano by Mark Taimanov.

him my summary: they were both worthy of it! That was exactly 55 years ago, and their names were Boleslavsky and Bronstein. There you go!'

Singing was his passion, and in his youth he studied with the famous Professor Zlobin, constantly visiting him in Petersburg. Smyslov also considered a professional career. He was heard in the Bolshoi Theatre and in the Mariinsky (then the Kirov). The artistic director and conductor of the theatre, Boris Khaykin, hearing Smyslov, noted his voice and technique and agreed to accept him in the company, on condition that he could put on the poster for *The Queen of Spades* – 'in the role of Yeletsky – Grandmaster Vasily Smyslov'.

He always enjoyed singing, you didn't have to ask him twice. Caruso was Smyslov's favourite singer, and he often described how the great Italian had appeared to him in a dream and given him important advice on questions of singing technique.

September 19, 1997. The Central Chess Club on Gogol Boulevard. He was very excited: his new CD had just come out. He gave me the CD. He talked non-stop about music, success, destiny, karma and his plans for the future: 'You know, Genna, Stradivarius did his most fruitful work in the period from age 72 to 93. So everything's still ahead of me!'

August 1, 2001. Celebrating: 'I've composed my 64th study! I'm coming close to number 66, the Number of the Beast, it's true. Do you want me to tell you it? You say that Timman liked my studies, that they reminded him of Selezniev's? Say hello to Jan from me, of course, only my studies aren't like Selezniev's, or Grigoriev's. They're Smyslov studies! What's the latest theme? Who knows? My theme. Smyslov's! There's never been such a theme before...'

In 2001 he was playing in Amsterdam in the Veterans versus Women tournament. I went to see him in the evening, after he'd won a long endgame against Alisa Galliamova. He was very pleased with himself. 'Genna, do you remember the joke about the nephew who received an invitation from his blind uncle in America to come and take over his business? He goes to the KGB. There they advise him to write a letter: sell the business and send the money to the USSR. He receives a reply from his uncle – I'm blind, but I haven't gone crazy yet. It's the same with me: the damsels think I can't do anything. I may be blind, but I haven't gone crazy yet.'

February 21, 2004. I'm in Moscow, the hotel Rossiya. A morning call. 'I didn't wake you up, did I, Genna? What's the time now? Eight? We just woke up, we don't know what time it is, Nadyusha said I should call Genna... Are you stopping in for lunch with us today? We woke up, Nadine turned on my radio, and we heard that it was ten to two in the morning. Nadyusha started listening to the radio – what were they broadcasting? I hadn't managed to cross myself on my forehead, and instead of the Lord's Prayer I had to listen to all kinds of rubbish.'

At his place at noon the same day. Everything is old-fashioned, there's an awful jumble on the lunch table: a bowl of fruit, a table lamp ('this is the one under which Levenfish and I wrote our book'), with a little icon leaning against it, a very simple one, sent by me from Rhodes a while back, and next to it a postcard with a picture of some saint on it, a pile of his recently-published pamphlets on the rook endgame, big and small plates. Next to that there's a chess table with an endgame position on it.

His chair with a rope with little white balls on it draped over it: 'Very, very good for the back, they say, Genna. You sit down and your back gets massaged at the same time all by itself... My flat is messy, it's complete chaos, it's a jumble, you can't find anything.

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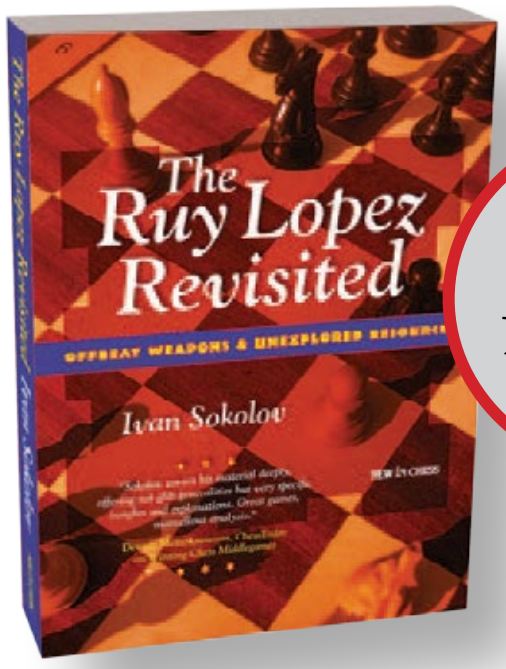
As a master of harmony, Smyslov not only sang well, he also knew how to conduct his pawns and pieces.

Everything's in suitcases, we have so many of these suitcases and they're all full of photographs, and all kinds of programmes, documents, messages, letters, even though I already got rid of so much... I should go through all this, but I'll never get it done... Fischer, he didn't like unwieldy trophies either, they only take up space, he said, he preferred to have money...'

At about three we started to say goodbye. He takes me by the elbow and says to his wife, 'I want to go outside with Genna and say something to him, Nadyusha.' I tensed up: here it comes. We went out to the spacious hallway. We stopped outside the doors of the neighbouring flat: 'Gennady Borisovich, I want to ask your advice.' I understand the importance of the moment, and I stay silent. 'These neighbours – you see –



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they've painted their front door dark brown, what do you think, can we do the same, or should we leave it the way it is? What do you think?'

May 3, 2004. 'I'll tell you this about the computer: it's a brilliant invention by mankind, but there are positive and negative aspects to it, Genna. Computers have come into chess for good and have brought a lot

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Vasily Smyslov at a session of his chess school in Azerbaijan.

of analytical clarity to it, but they've also destroyed the spirit of the game, the clash of personalities. It was so interesting when you had people with different personalities and styles. Botvinnik did it one way, Tal another way, Geller a third way...

'But a computer cracks problems as if they were sunflower seeds: one, two, and it's done. Take Loyd's problems, for example, it solves them in a couple of seconds with a simple search for moves. I'm just waiting for the moment when it finds one variation on top of another, everything crashes, computers choke on their information and all their transformers burn out. I still remember going into the club to see Mikhail Moiseevich, to his laboratory, as Botvinnik was also trying to build a computer that could smash a human. I wished him success, but only after I'm no longer around...'

April 30, 2004 '...I've created a miniature, a pawn endgame, do you have a pencil? Write it down... It's this, it's trivial, but I'm toiling over my 100th study now, nothing's jumping out for me, I want it to be more complicated and more elegant... It was done and I gave it to the computer to check it... The calculating devils found a hole in one spot.

'I'm working on a book – my 60 best games, I was looking at my game with Savon recently. And I found so many mistakes with the computer, just one mistake after another. And I considered that game one of my best... Yes, the computer can outdo anyone now. Or I was commenting on my first win against Petrosian. I wrote that if this, then this, 'tightening the circle of the blockade, with a quick win'. And then Ken Neat checked it all on a computer and wrote that it advises this and that, and it isn't clear how to continue tightening the circle of the blockade. So I had to write that if this and that, then a win is still a long way off...

'The only thing that cheers me up is that the computer has control of positions with six pieces on the board, but with seven it will be harder for it, because you'll need 300 truckloads of them, as the number of positions increases exponentially. Remember the tale about the rajah and the grains of wheat? That's what it's like with seven pieces, and ultimately it may turn out that chess is simply a mathematical problem, and then it becomes clear that human life is also a mathematical problem, and only the Lord God knows the answer to it.'

October 1, 2004. 'How are you? I'm fighting time and feebleness. Nadezhda Andreevna is reading your book to me, she just read about Botvinnik... Mikhail Moiseevich was a lonely man at the end, he went to work at the club by trolleybus or walked... I asked him back then, aren't you afraid, Mikhail Moiseevich? – as he could hardly see anything – and he said: I know every hole in the pavement, every bump. And he always gave me tea if I came to the club, and sandwiches with Borodinsky [coriander rye] bread, he really liked that Borodinsky bread... But his colleagues, mathematicians, were very sceptical about his ideas, which is why he often changed his employees, but his ideas were cranky, to be honest, as we know now...

'But Mikhail Moiseevich, as everyone knows, never retreated from his principles. He came to our dacha, he particularly liked little cabbage pies, my Nadezhda makes heavenly ones, you ate them yourself, you know... And I went to his dacha, once I stayed for about four days and we played a few training games, three, I think. I didn't take them seriously, but Mikhail Moiseevich gave them his all... How did they end? I lost one game, and the other two were draws. That's where we stopped. Mikhail Moiseevich certainly understood that I was playing the fool. I know that Geller was also at his dacha

and also played a few games, but he couldn't stand it there, he ran away because he was hungry. You see, Mikhail Moiseevich had lunch, dinner, everything on a schedule, and that wasn't much for Efim Petrovich, for his sins he liked to eat, so he ate biscuits at night a couple of times, and then he couldn't stand it any longer. His wife Oksana told me that, but women like to exaggerate, you know that yourself, so I don't know how much of that is true...

'Another time we came to his dacha, the door slammed shut and the key was on the inside. He started reprimanding his wife, what's going on, Gannochka, how could you do this? But then he went somewhere, got a long ladder, clambered up it to the attic and opened the door from the inside. I remember saying to him, Mikhail Moiseevich, you're OK, you can climb up a ladder to get to girls through the attic too... Mikhail Moiseevich didn't mind any kind of work, I saw him with a shovel, and with a broom, he himself swept the paths to his dacha, and he did it painstakingly... True, at the end of his life he could hardly see anything. I remember, I was with him in Linares, so I took him by the hand when we were crossing the road – me with my eyesight! – and he said, it's green, let's go! I thought I'd make a mistake – both ex-world champions going off to the next world at one stroke...'

'64' MAGAZINE

Politburo member Klim Voroshilov presents Vasily Smyslov with the Lenin Order, named after the man he privately preferred to call 'the Antichrist'.

April 28, 2005. 'We have a tense situation in the federation now, and no one knows how it's going to end. As Barreras said, there was an official by that name in Cuba, Mr. Who Knows. Whatever you asked him, he said, who knows, in this place, who knows? You know, Genna, I'm on a diet now. For my eyes. I don't know if they'll get better, but it's good that they're not getting worse. I have to eat only natural products, and everything that is made by human hands is harmful. Any salamis, sausages, even chicken is bad – nowadays God knows what they feed the chickens. And I can't drink milk, or sour cream, everything I used to like so much.

'But all kinds of vegetables are very good. For example, courgettes, tomatoes, aubergines, a little garlic for flavour, fry it all up with onion in sunflower oil over a slow flame to get it just right. It's an amazing dish, it's divine when Nadezhda Andreevna makes it. Only, Genna, bear in mind that the courgettes have to be young, then you don't have to peel them, the skin is good for you, too. No, lately I'm not drinking at all, but the experts say that the most useful of all is a little vodka, but I hardly drink vodka at all either, because there isn't anyone in particular to drink it with, except when you come to Moscow in November... True, the other day at a restaurant I knocked down a little shot at some celebration or other. Of vodka. So Nadezhda Andreevna immediately put a stop to that, and, seeing a carafe of fruit juice, she poured me some. She only thought it was juice. In fact it was red wine. And it wasn't bad, either. I was so drunk, you know, that I could hardly get up from my seat, I could hardly drag myself home...

'My leg hurts for some reason, it has become difficult to walk now. The doctor said recently that the leg has to be worked on, I have to do exercises, and I said to him, what kind of exercises? I'm an honoured master of sport and you're talking to me about exercises?...

'I had visitors here recently from the Roerich Institute [of Himalayan Studies], and you know what they said? Whose reincarnation I am? Alekhine? No, Alekhine is Kasparov. Tarrasch is Hübner. And I'm Petroff, Alexander Dmitrievich. The one who invented the defence, although mainly he was a councillor of state. Remember, Petrov also composed a problem – Napoleon's Retreat from Moscow. In Moscow nowadays it's all about the rubles, everyone only thinks about money. Recently I often remember Botvinnik. He divided everyone into two categories: rascals and scoundrels. Now what do you see? It's money, money, money...'

One day he said: 'You know, Genna, when I became world champion, I got the feeling that the whole world had risen up against me. This didn't help me to have a peaceful life or a relaxed mindset. Perhaps that's why I lost the return match with Botvinnik, and not only because I was seriously ill during the match. Or perhaps I felt the internal discomfort because I was ill... Do I regret anything? Yes, I do. It's a pity that I wasn't serious and academic, and if I had been, perhaps then I would have stayed world champion for longer. And I have regrets about my singing. Perhaps if I'd worked more diligently it would have been more use. Your friend in Amsterdam, the singer, he doesn't consider my talent to be at all amateurish. That's a compliment to me, of course.'

Lately a cat had appeared at their dacha, they called it Squirrel. Now it was the main topic of conversation. They treated it like a child, they talked to it like a person, tenderly and kindly. Even their intonation changed – there was love in their voices.

A call on December 23, 2005. 'We're going to the dacha for the New Year. We used to celebrate New Year's at the dacha sometimes, and now we're only staying there because of Squirrelly. She immediately became my darling. She's so soft, and her little eyes are like buttons. And she's fastidious: I buy chopped liver for her, I can't touch it myself, but she loves it so much. And she only accepts special cat food, we tried to give her fish and other things, but she'll only take that. She's a beauty, she's all white, and her sides are beige, and her little eyes sparkle...'

June 9, 2006. 'You know, Genna, we sent our little cat, Squirrelly, to the hospital, for an operation, how shall I explain what it was for? Basically it turned out that Squirrel is a boy, a tom cat, that is, but still charming, quite charming. But she can't be let outside, she'll immediately start chasing birds, and if she catches one then you can't prevent something bad from happening, now this isn't so safe, Genna, if you understand what I mean. What do you mean, why? They said on the television that avian flu is all over the place now. Birds are safe? No, you can't say that, there's a reason why they call it avian flu...'

'What do you think,' he asked one day, 'which game of mine do I like best? You'll probably say one of the ones with Botvinnik, or Keres, or Reshevsky... Blunder! With Gerasimov! I was 14, and it was my first published game. My father was very proud of it, he played through it himself and showed it to his friends: look at the combination my Vasya came up with! And the leader of our chess group in the Zamoskvorechye district Fyodor Lvovich Fogelevich also showed it to everyone, he said, here's a future champion! Even Misha Tal liked the attack in that game. Misha said you can see a huge talent just from that one game. Ah, Misha, Misha... A year before his death he was at my home, and we played blitz for about three hours straight. In my youth I was a strong blitz player and I liked to fool with it, for my sins. So Misha won all the games we played. Every one of them, and his heart was barely beating...

'Which success do I consider to be the biggest of my life? Winning the Candidates' tournaments, you say? The match with Botvinnik? Blunder again! I achieved my biggest success in 1937, Genna. At the championship of the Young Pioneers Stadium, where I won all 11 games, didn't give away a single draw, and there were strong players there, almost all of them became masters, I kept the tournament table from that event.

'Until I was 14 my father only allowed me to play at home, he held me back, he didn't want me to get involved in competitions. Perhaps that's why I finished school with top marks. I played him at home, and his friends, and then I went to the Zamoskvoretsky House of Pioneers. I remember Simagin, the boy in the velvet jacket, he was considered a wunderkind. I beat Simagin too...

'And you know, Genna, when Alekhine was asked just before his death which of the young players he considered the most promising, he said there's someone called Smyslov in Russia. And it may have been for a short time, but I was the best in the world in my field.'

I called him on March 9, 2003. 'Today's an anniversary, Vasily Vasilievich.' 'What anniversary is it now?' 'Today, Vasily Vasilievich, Fischer turns 60.' 'Are you serious, I remember him when he was still a little boy. How time flies... So Fischer's 60, Vasiukov recently turned 70, I sang at his place at the celebration. Fischer... They read me, they read me his comments. He's crazy, of course. Crazy in his ideas... But recently I was asked to sign a book for him – he really liked my books. I signed one, of course. But you know, it's such a coincidence: this morning a lady came to visit us, a friend of Nadezhda Andreevna, and she asked if it was true that Fischer was the most brilliant player in the whole history of chess. And I told her: it's true, of course, except that apart from him there were other most brilliant players...

'And by the way, today isn't only a big day for Fischer, it's also the Sunday of Forgiveness [last Sunday before the Orthodox Lent]! So we all have to forgive each other today. So forgive me, then, Gennady Borisovich, if I've said or done anything wrong...'

'And you forgive me, Vasily Vasilievich.'

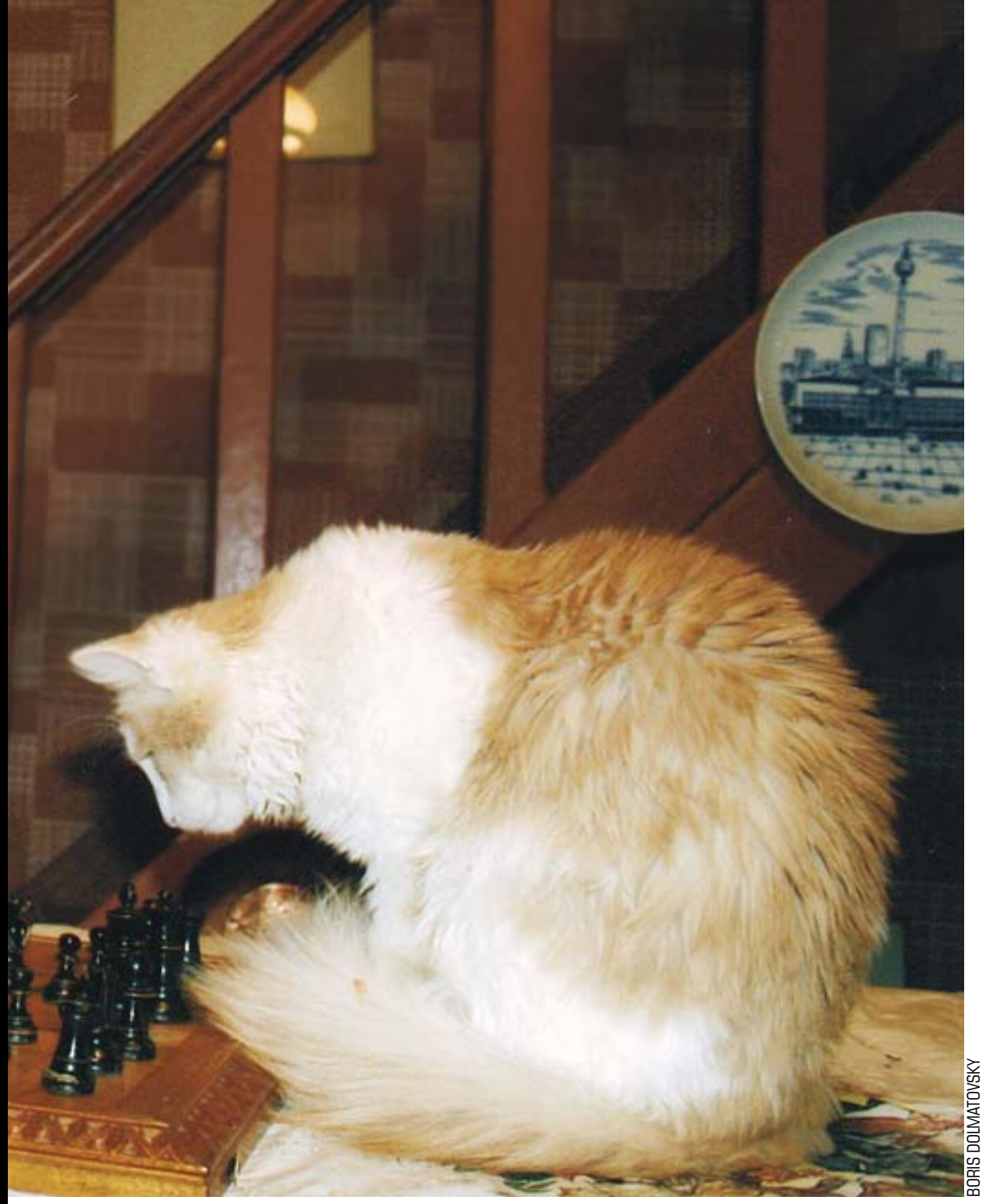
Squirrel

Oleg Pervakov

The dacha village of Razdory is situated just outside Moscow, in Rublevka, which has become unrecognizable in the post-Soviet era. Five to six metre-tall brick walls, with the towers of the New Russians' palaces rising up behind them... In these surroundings you don't immediately spot the Smyslovs' small dacha behind a low wooden fence. For the past five years Vasily Vasilievich and Nadezhda Andreevna lived here permanently.

They visited Moscow, but very rarely and for unavoidable business – to go to the clinic, to pay the bills for their flat in the Stalin skyscraper on Vosstaniya Square, or for occasional celebratory evenings at the chess club on Gogol Boulevard.

To blame for their 'solitude' in Razdory was... a cat called Squirrel. Hungry and shivering from the cold, the cat wandered into the Smyslovs' dacha in the winter of 2004-05. It stayed there and became the darling of the seventh world champion and his spouse.



BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

Chess at the Smyslov dacha. Squirrel intensely studies his boss's opening set-up.

The well-known Moscow photographer Boris Dolmatovsky hurried to be the first to establish proof of the increase in the Smyslov family.

Vasily Vasilievich and I often talked on the phone, we discussed the news from the chess world, and shared new study ideas and findings. Of course, I also visited the Smyslovs at their dacha, as the journey from my flat to Razdory was about 15 minutes on the local train. I soon got to know Squirrel, too. The nice, pleasant gingery-white creature turned out to be very sociable. While Nadezhda Andreevna laid the table, Squirrel whirled around my legs, and then unceremoniously jumped onto my knee. But what a commotion started when Vasily Vasilievich got the chessboard out and tried to set up the position for his new study! Squirrel immediately got into the middle of the chess action and carefully moved the pieces around with her paw. With great difficulty Smyslov nevertheless managed to finish his demonstration of the study.

Next time I came to Razdory to see the Smyslovs in the spring, in early March. The gate was unexpectedly locked. I called them on the phone, and Nadezhda Andreevna picked up: 'Vasya's in the allotment, he's trying to catch Squirrel, who ran off...' At that moment the gate opened, and I saw a desperately distraught Vasily Vasilievich. 'Oleg, something terrible's happened, Squirrelly has run away!'

'Vasily Vasilievich, she won't get anywhere. She'll run off and come back, especially since she probably remembers her difficult childhood', I tried to calm Smyslov.

'Oh, don't even talk about it... it's March, if our Squirrelly brings us kittens, what are we old people going to do with them?'

Having uselessly tried to catch Squirrel, who at that very moment made an energetic dash in our vicinity and watched us craftily from an unattainable distance, we went into the house. We left the door to the veranda open, and soon the little gingery-white ball ran right into the house, pursued by another mewing creature. Vasily Vasilievich's mood changed before my very eyes, a smile appeared on his face, and he picked up Squirrel and began reproving her in an affectionate, fatherly manner.

In the summer I was in Razdory again. It was a hot evening, and the doors and windows of the Smyslovs' dacha were wide open. I was surprised: what about Squirrel? Embarrassed by my question, Vasily Vasilievich averted his gaze and said, 'It turns out that our Squirrelly is a tom cat... So now he enjoys absolute freedom!'

We laughed for a long time. And then Vasily Vasilievich got the chessboard and tipped out the pieces. Do I need to say that at that moment we heard a sound on the doorstep of the dacha and the crafty gingery-white mug of a cat named Squirrel immediately appeared...

Oleg Pervakov, Grandmaster of Composition and editor of 64, edited Vasily Smyslov's collected chess studies.

Ten Full-Blooded Games

He had not come to win. His aim was to enjoy himself, to gauge his current form in view of the upcoming world championship match, to try some new openings. And to play ten full-blooded games. Well, full-blooded they certainly were. Showing his trademark fighting spirit and skirting many a precipice, Veselin Topalov was a guarantee for excitement on almost every day of the 27th Ciudad de Linares tournament. The Bulgarian's play was far from impeccable and more than once his fate hung by a thread, but after he had ground down Boris Gelfand in a breathtaking last-round effort the consensus was that a great fighter had deservedly won his first Linares trophy and the €75,000 winner's cheque.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

The Grand Slam tournaments seem to come with extreme weather conditions this year. While Wijk aan Zee saw more snow and ice than in the past two decades together, the 27th Ciudad de Linares tournament was accompanied by unusual quantities of rain. Watching the photos on the tournament website, viewers at home may have thought that some of the participants had adopted a fashionable wet-look. In actual fact they had only made the 10-minute walk from the Anibal Hotel to the Teatro Cervantes without an umbrella. In a country that in the past years has seen protracted periods of drought and where there's a realistic fear that whole regions may turn into deserts, one might guess that these torrents of rain were most welcome. That was only partly the case. Once all the water basins had been filled to capacity, the locals got just as fed up with the never-ending downpours as everyone else.

One of the joys of going to Linares for the annual chess tournament is the lovely spring weather that normally welcomes you. Still, few people grumbled about the low temperatures and the showers. More than that, there was relief that the tournament was being held at all. The financial crisis has hit Spain hard, and an international chess tournament with a fat first prize is difficult to explain to citizens who see the value of their houses plummet and fear for their jobs. Things might have been easier if the burden could have been shared with another city, as in the years 2006-2008, when the first half took place in Morelia, Mexico. However, despite renewed attempts to find

Veselin Topalov claims first Linares trophy on the eve of match against Vishy Anand

On the final free day, at a time (11 a.m.) that most of his colleagues were still in bed, Veselin Topalov played a simul in the Anibal Hotel.

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such a partner (and the tournament still being called 'intercontinental') all games were once again played in Linares.

The most notable measures to save money were a reduction of the prize-fund and a smaller number of participants. Six players instead of eight made the tournament four rounds shorter, and instead of €100,000 there was €75,000 waiting for the winner. Among the grandmasters there was only one of the Fab Four. With Vishy Anand, Magnus Carlsen and Vladimir Kramnik being absent for different reasons, Veselin Topalov was the main candidate for first place. Or was he? Would the Bulgarian really play his energy-draining power chess and fight full force or would he take a more laid-back approach and save his opening ideas for the world championship match against Anand? It was a bit of both. As he put it himself: 'I was trying to get an idea about my current form, to enjoy myself, try some new openings and play ten full-blooded games.'

On top of that he didn't forget to mention that €75,000 remained an appetizing amount. Just like he didn't shy away from a well-paid simul on the final rest day. At a time of the day (11 a.m.) that most of his colleagues were still in bed, a fresh and beaming Topalov appeared in the lobby of the Anibal Hotel ready to take on 21 opponents (+18, = 3, –0), sign their score-sheets and good-humouredly go over the critical phases of their games. Exhibitions like these have contributed heavily to his popularity in Linares, and there was no question who the local fans and the hotel staff were rooting for. For the first time Topalov was given the Kasparov suite and in the restaurant he and his Dutch seconds, Erwin l'Ami and Jan Smeets, sat at the table where Linares' favourite chess son once used to have his meals.

And he delivered. His performance doesn't rank among his best efforts ever, but full-blooded his fights certainly were. Topalov's first win in Round 2 against Gashimov was perhaps his smoothest effort, and it was this game that he chose to annotate himself. But the

vehement clash in Round 3 with Aronian will not easily be forgotten, even though it ended in a draw. In an ultra-sharp Benoni the Bulgarian seemed to be in deep trouble, and his opponent felt extremely optimistic during the game. But afterwards this assessment was revised, as you can read in Aronian's notes to this epic fight. The move with which Topalov proved that he was out of danger was of great beauty. Both players were rewarded for their inspired play at the prize-giving, where their game won the beauty prize, which consisted of 27 litres of olive oil for each of them.

For Aronian this was his third draw in the tournament, and at this point he could not have guessed that six more draws would follow before he finally scored his first win in the final round. Looking back, the Armenian opined that his plus-1 score was more than he could have dreamed of. 'In general I deserved to have a few zeroes to my name, because I was playing badly. I was missing things, couldn't calculate well. I didn't have the required preparation. During Wijk aan Zee (where he didn't play – DJtG) I should have gone somewhere and trained and I didn't. That was a mistake. When you don't have ideas before the games you waste a lot of energy. In some games I didn't know what to play until 30 minutes before they started. I should have been lying down and listening to music, but instead I was doing some stupid chess things. If you have the ideas, it's not only that you can catch your opponent, but you also come to the game with confidence. It's not clear that you will use it, but you've got something, which leads to a different attitude.'

The game that Aronian finally won was against Vugar Gashimov, and as the grandmaster from Azerbaijan was Black it was no surprise that it featured a Benoni. Gashimov played his first 'super-tournament', but he didn't enter a totally new world. 'The only player I hadn't played before was Topalov. But it's a hard tournament to play, because they are all strong players and there's never a weaker opponent for a change.' He certainly didn't blame his bottom place (well, with Vallejo and Gelfand also scoring 4/10, half the field finished last) on his sharp opening choices, which apart from the Benoni also included the Najdorf. 'Starting from the World Cup I changed my repertoire, as I was somehow tired of playing closed positions. I wanted to play more interesting openings and in general they served me well.' Indeed, Gashimov was the only player to win a game with black in Linares (a Benoni against Vallejo). For the problems he had he offered a different explanation. 'I checked all my games, and before the time-trouble phase they were all really high-level. All my mistakes were made in time-trouble. I think the main reason was that I hadn't played in a tournament without time increments for almost three years.' Was that the main lesson he drew from his Linares debut, that he should arrange his time better if there are no increments? It wasn't that alone. 'If I were to play here again, I'd know better when to play for a win. Now I tried to play for a win in every game; maybe that was a mistake.'

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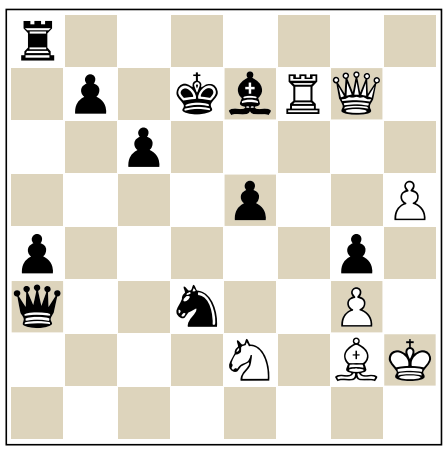
Once again the GMs played their games on the stage of the Teatro Cervantes.

But then one got the idea that Topalov was playing for a win in every game, too, and in his case it paid off. You probably also need luck, as the top-seed found out in Round 5, when he took the lead with a turbulent win over Alexander Grischuk. In a Najdorf with 6.♗e3, Topalov didn't achieve anything special from the opening. The game exploded to life on move 21, when he happily sacrificed a knight, not because he had objective reasons to do so, but because he felt irresistibly attracted to the idea. From that moment on, the outcome of the game was anybody's guess, as both players missed chances for which hardly anybody could blame them. The last mistake was made by Gris-

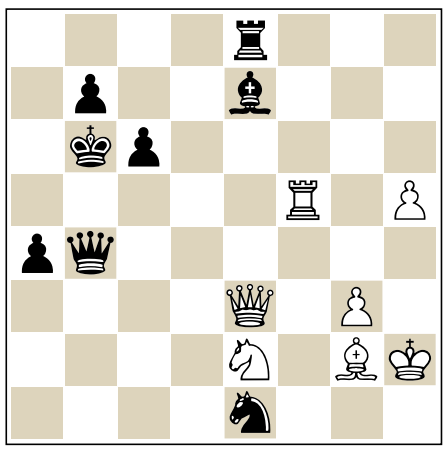
chuk, who was then outplayed in the endgame. As a result, Topalov was comfortably in the lead halfway the tournament, a full point ahead of Aronian, Gashimov and Grischuk.

In Round 6 Topalov once more discovered that Lady Luck was on his side. As he and Vallejo have been training together on various occasions, he chose an opening that had not featured in their sessions. This was not a success. The Spanish grandmaster played well and reached a winning position. His only remaining problem was his clock, on which there was very little time left. The game turned around when Vallejo only had seconds left.



Topalov-Vallejo
position after 33.h5

In a hectic time-scramble White has created counterchances with his h-pawn. **33...♘e1** With 33...♕b4 Black could have protected the pawn on g4 and cleared the path for the a-pawn. **34.♕xg4+** Also strong was 34.♗e4. **34...♔c7 35.♕e6 ♖e8 36.♕xe5+ ♔b6 37.♖f5 ♕b4 38.♕e3+**



By now 38...♔c7 39.♕e5+, etc., with a draw, would have been an 'acceptable' end to the game, but down to three seconds Vallejo drops a full rook.
38...♗c5? 39.♕xe8 ♘xg2 40.♔xg2 a3
and having reviewed the situation, Black resigned.

It wasn't the only chance Vallejo missed. His bad handling of the clock cost him more points, and

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Paco Vallejo couldn't believe the number of chances he missed. 'The first problem I have to solve is my running short of time.'

when, in the final rounds, he had convinced himself to play faster, he lacked the precision to grab the chances he got. In fact, the only game in which he was really worse was against Gelfand in Round 3, where foreseeing a bleak future he decided to muddy the waters with a highly speculative queen sacrifice. This time it was his opponent who lost the thread and Vallejo managed to escape with a draw. At the end of the tournament he knew perfectly well what he should do better next time. 'The first problem I have to solve is my running short of time, and secondly when I have a clear advantage I should be more precise. And the third thing is energy. After five hours I really am not working at the same level anymore, and the way to solve that is just to do more sports.'

For Gelfand the missed opportunity against Vallejo was not the only one. 'I was also totally winning against Gashimov, a pawn up for nothing with a better position. Against Vallejo almost any move would win, and I thought I had found the simplest way, but somehow it turned out to be not winning. It was a disastrous tournament.' One reason for Gelfand's weak play was the enthusiasm that his win in the World Cup whipped up in Israel. 'My energy level was quite low. After the World Cup I became a kind of star in my country, and that took so much energy. I had to give something like 20, 30 interviews. Radio, newspapers, they're making a documentary. On the one hand I don't enjoy this, but on the other hand it's my duty for chess. And it's always nice if people come up to you in

the street and congratulate you. But I have to think how to do better next time.'

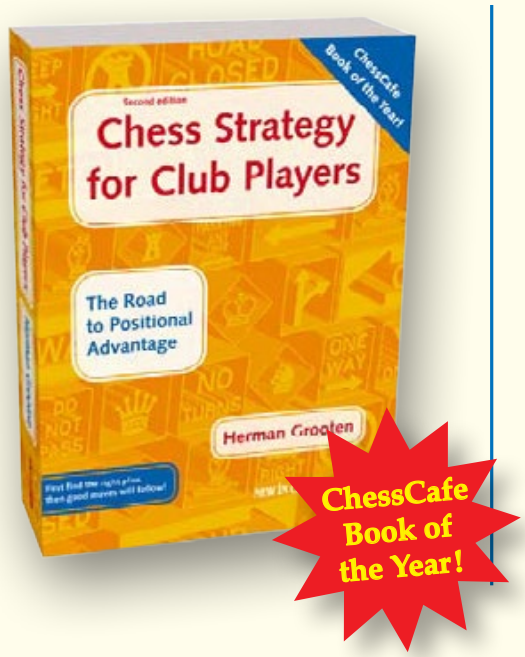
With his win over Vallejo, Topalov increased his lead to one and a half points. As a pleasant side-effect he also overtook Magnus Carlsen in the Live Ratings. With four rounds to go, this margin looked like a comfortable cushion, but there was good reason to believe that one man was still looking for his chances. Defending champion Alexander Grischuk was playing well, and in the penultimate round he faced Topalov with the white pieces. One round before that key game the Russian champion increased the significance of their encounter by defeating Gashimov. Now a win over Topalov would propel him to shared first place.

Last year Grischuk lived like a hermit in Linares, barely leaving his room and hardly seeing anybody. The only times he left the hotel were to play his games in the Teatro Cervantes and to cross the street to buy cigarettes. This time he brought a second, Denis Khismatullin, and the fact that the tournament was four rounds shorter also helped to fight off the boredom. One might expect that bringing a second was a boon for his openings, but Grischuk laughed this idea off. 'Actually, my preparation occurred in perhaps one game out of 10. At the end we were just laughing when preparing, as we were sure that what we were preparing would not happen. And we were right.'

Probably the best novelty he played was in his second game against Topalov, which you will find, together with Grischuk's notes, further on. But this wasn't the fruit of his work with Khismatullin either, as he found the move ('a very reasonable novelty') over the board. When he sat down for that crucial game, he was no longer thinking about the painful defeat he had suffered after Topalov's dubious knight sacrifice in Round 5. 'I enjoyed that game, because it is for games like this that I love chess, a huge fight. I lost, but I have no real regrets about this game.'

And he was less sombre about that second game than the comments he picked up around him. 'I was very surprised to read on some chess sites that people were extremely pessimistic about my chances. I could not understand why. I was much more optimistic than the media, and I won.' With one round to go he drew level with Topalov. Everything was to be decided on the final day, when Grischuk faced Vallejo with black, while Topalov was White against Gelfand. A potent mix of willpower, determination and luck decided the issue.

After Grischuk had drawn his game against Vallejo, the game between Topalov and Gelfand seemed to be steering for a draw, too. The white player had reached an almost winning position and won an exchange, when he suddenly gave back the exchange and ended up in an endgame that looked more like a draw than a technical win. For Grischuk and his second the developments on Topalov's board were tough to watch. Fortunately, there was an excellent way to divert their minds, as their favourites from CSKA Moscow were playing a qualifier for the Champions League against Sevilla. Weeks ago, when he had taken a closer look at the schedule, Grischuk had seen, much to his horror, that the final round in Linares clashed with this match, and for the first time he had regretted that the last round in a



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While Veselin Topalov tried to outsmart Boris Gelfand in a tricky ending, Alexander Grischuk and his second Denis Khismatullin diverted their minds watching the Champions League qualifier between CSKA Moscow and Sevilla.

chess tournament didn't start early but at exactly the same time as the previous rounds. But now everything looked fine, as they could watch the match and keep half an eye on Gelfand, who seemed to be saving the draw. Despite some reservations, this was also the opinion of most of the grandmasters around. But things were more complicated than they seemed. Looking back, Gelfand even stated that he believed almost every grandmaster would have lost this endgame in a practical game. You can see where he finally went wrong in the notes to the game by Topalov's second Jan Smeets, although just looking at the moment where Gelfand could have saved himself would do injustice to Topalov's formidable perseverance.

Grischuk kept a straight face, but it was clear that this was a painful moment. As he described it the next day: 'I felt like a kid who was promised some toy by his parents. They even gave it to me, but then they took it back.'

Topalov reacted in his typical phlegmatic manner. He was pleased that he had won the one Grand Slam tournament that was missing on his resume, but that 'doesn't change the fact that I made too many mistakes.' His overall conclusions were positive, because he also managed to see good sides to bad moments. Such as his loss to Grischuk, which not only brought back the tension, but also cost him first place in the Live Rankings by less than one rating point. 'I just got worse and I couldn't save the game. But this is the kind of situation I discussed with Silvio (Danailov), which can easily happen in a match. You lose a game and then you have to recover. I didn't intend to lose, but it was a valuable experience to see if I could recover after a loss. That was good. Even though I am not really happy with my game against Gelfand. What I did between moves 25 and 40 was incredible. But at least after move 40 I created problems for him.'

How did his attitude in Linares compare to Anand's in Wijk aan Zee? 'I think the attitude was more or less similar. My impression was that he wanted to perform well, but he didn't really care about winning the tournament. That was not my aim either, but it's a different format. With six players you're simply first when you have plus 3. With plus 2 in Wijk aan Zee you don't fight for first place.'

And does he really not mind that he failed to reclaim first place in the world rankings, after being so close? 'That's absolutely true. It's like the first time you climb Mount Everest. That's great. The second time it's fine, the third time you don't really care so much. It's better to be first than second, but it's not like an obsession.'

So, will the coming weeks mean a secluded life frantically preparing for the match? 'No, I am more relaxed these days. I've come to the conclusion that it is simply impossible to be completely one hundred per cent prepared. It's even a problem to remember all the lines. So I am taking it easier, I am not so obsessed.'

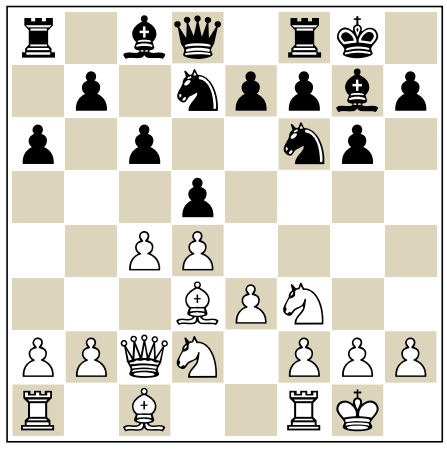
Linares 2010 **cat. XXI**

				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Veselin Topalov	IGM BUL	2805	* *	1 0	½ ½	½ 1	½ 1	1 ½	6½	2858
2	Alexander Grischuk	IGM RUS	2736	0 1	* *	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	6	2834
3	Levon Aronian	IGM ARM	2781	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	5½	2789
4	Paco Vallejo	IGM ESP	2705	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	0 ½	4	2696
5	Boris Gelfand	IGM ISR	2761	½ 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	4	2685
6	Vugar Gashimov	IGM AZE	2759	0 ½	½ 0	½ 0	1 ½	½ ½	* *	4	2685

NOTES BY
Veselin Topalov

SL 1.4 – D11
Veselin Topalov
Vugar Gashimov
Linares 2010 (2)

1.d4 d5
In my first encounter with Vugar I was ready to meet his usual Benoni, but he was the first to deviate.
2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♕c2
I have also played 5.♗d2 and 5.♘bd2 in this position.
5...g6
5...e6 is the other main continuation here.
6.♗d3 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘bd2
This looks to me to be more flexible than 8.♘c3, which leads to a position played hundreds of times.
8...♘bd7



9.cxd5 cxd5
Personally I believe 9...♘xd5 is more in the spirit of the position. My intention was to play 10.a3, but 10...e5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♘f3 ♗c7! is completely fine for Black.
10.b3
10.b4 was more ambitious and probably better.
10...♘b8
I was expecting 10...b6, followed by ...♗b7 and ...♖c8. But even after the loss of so many tempi Black's position remains very solid.
11.♗a3 ♘c6 12.♖ac1 ♗e6 13.♕b2 ♖e8 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♖c2

15...♗f5
There was nothing much happening in the last few moves, but this move changes the position. Black spoils his pawn structure a bit, but gets control of square e4.
16.♗xf5 gxf5 17.♘e1
This allows 17...f4!, and if 18.exf4 then 18...♘h5.
17...♘e4
The most natural move in the position, but not the best one. As I mentioned, 17...f4 was possible, and the 'anti-positional' 17...e5 would also have given Black very active play.

Finally. Mayor Juan Fernandez Gutierrez hands Veselin Topalov his first Linares trophy.

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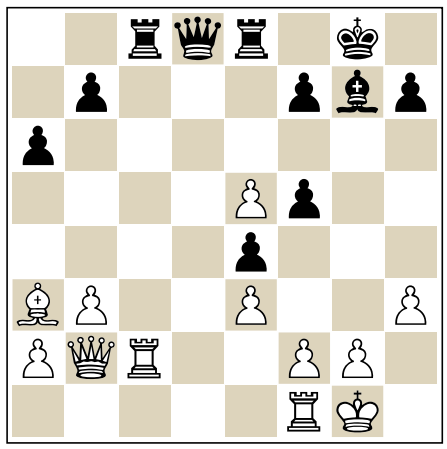
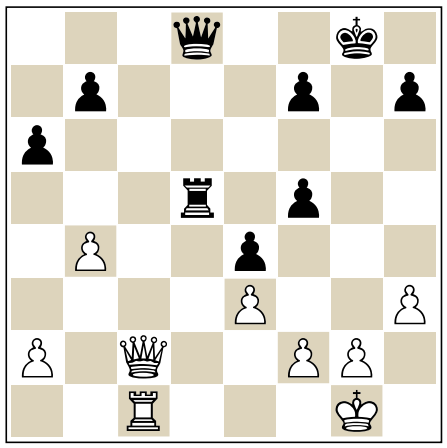
18.♘d3 e5
White's plan was to play ♖fc1, followed by ♘f1 and f3, or ♘f3-e5 increasing the pressure on ♘c6, so logically my opponent tries to break free.
19.♘xe4 dxe4 20.♘xe5 ♘xe5 21. dxe5



21...♖xc2?!
The start of a wrong plan. Vugar believed it was beneficial for him to exchange the bishops, and he forced it. In fact, without bishops his king and pawns become more vulnerable.
Better was 21...♗xe5 22.♖xc8

♕xc8 23.♕e2 f4!, and equality is not far away.

22.♕xc2 ♕a5 23.♗d6 ♗xe5 24.b4 ♕d8 25.♗xe5 ♖xe5 26.♖c1 ♖d5



27.a4

My opponent was already in serious time-trouble, and I decided to advance my pawns on the queenside.

Another useful pawn move was 27.g3 in order to meet 27...h5 with 28.h4, but I wanted to keep the option to have ♔h2-g3.

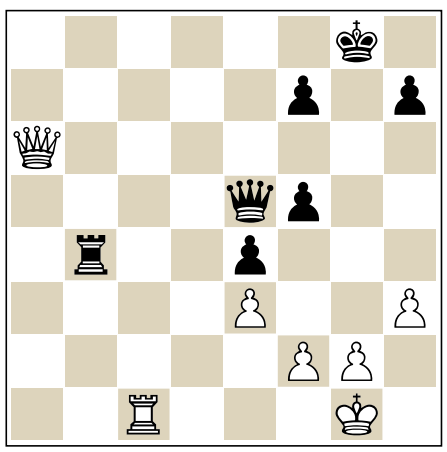
27...b5

Stronger in my opinion was 27...h5 and 28...h4, when Black has perpetual check in all queen endings.

28.axb5 ♖xb5

After 28...axb5 29.g3, Black still has serious problems, as pawns f5 and b5 are weak. With the move in the game Gashimov eliminates my pawn on b4 and everything will be decided on the kingside.

29.♕a4 ♕d6 30.♕a1 ♕e5 31.♕xa6 ♖xb4



32.♕h6!

Black has achieved his goal of exchanging all the pawns on the queenside, but it turns out that this is not the end of his problems.

32...♖b8 33.g3

I think Black's position is lost. The pawn on f5 is doomed, and after it e4 is going to fall. It is a miracle that Vugar made all his moves in such severe time-trouble.

33...♕e6 34.♕f4 ♖c8 35.♖d1

Stronger was 35.♖a1.

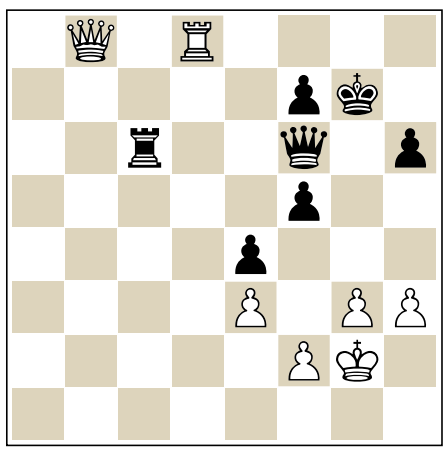
35...♖c6 36.♖d8+ ♔g7 37.♔g2

Simply a useful move, the kind of move one makes automatically.

37...h6

Black wants to hide his king on h7, but he will be too late.

38.♕b8 ♕f6



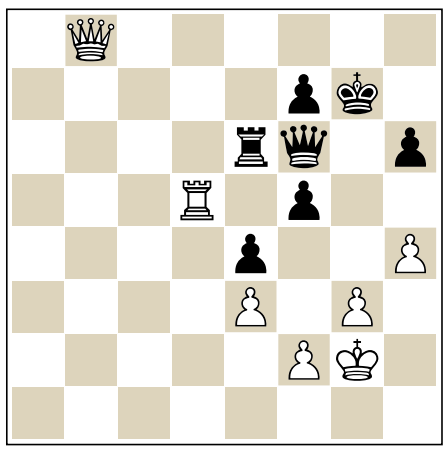
39.♖d5?

After 39.♖h8 the game would have been over very quickly.

39...♖e6

The rook is passive on e6, but at this point my opponent had only seconds left on the clock.

40.h4



40...h5?

The only chance for Black was to play a very difficult endgame after 40...f4 41.♕xf4 ♕xf4 42.gxf4, but understandably this is a very unlikely choice to make on the 40th move with only a couple of seconds on the clock... Now White is completely winning again.

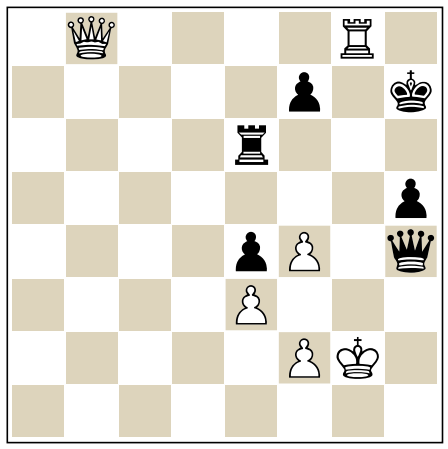
41.♖d8

The rook goes to g5, after which Black's defence will collapse.

41...♔h7 42.♖g8 f4 43.gxf4

43.♖g5 wins more quickly, but I had calculated a forced win after 43...♕xh4.

43...♕xh4



44.♖h8+ ♔g6 45.♕g8+ ♔f6 46.♕d8+ ♖e7 47.♖h6+ ♔f5 48.♕d5+ And Black resigned, as 48...♔g4 will be followed by 49.f3+, and he will soon be mated.

NOTES BY

Jan Smeets

RG 3.5 – C42

Veselin Topalov

Boris Gelfand

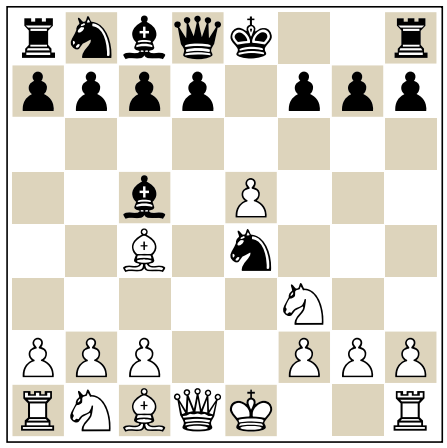
Linares 2010 (10)

A second's job is never over, not even when the tournament has finished! It is, apparently, also a second's duty to analyse games for New In Chess when the boss is too busy. So here we go. Round 10, the final round in the Linares tournament. Grischuk and Topalov are sharing first place at +2, with possible tie-breaks favouring Grischuk.

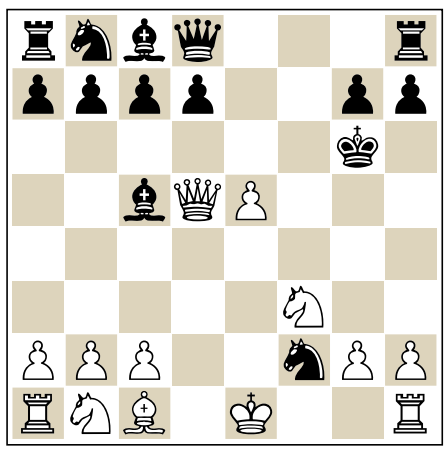
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

The Petroff, nothing else could be expected from the solid Gelfand.

'Not another boring Petroff!' I hear you say. I would like to take this opportunity to send a message to all Petroff-haters out there. It is not by definition boring and does not always lead to lifeless draws. To prove this point I will just give you my score on the black side of the Petroff in Corus, 1 out of 5, and the most enjoyable one of these games: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.d4 ♘xe4 4.dxe5 ♗c5 5.♗c4

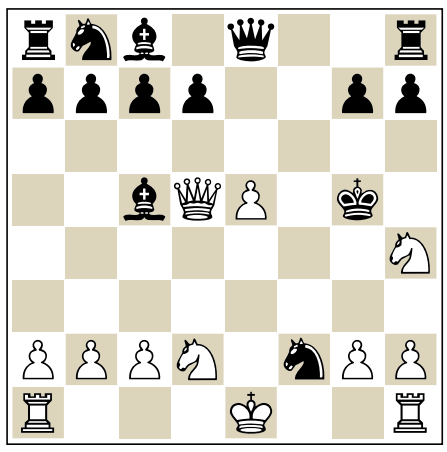


5...♘xf2 6.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 7.♕d5+ ♔g6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

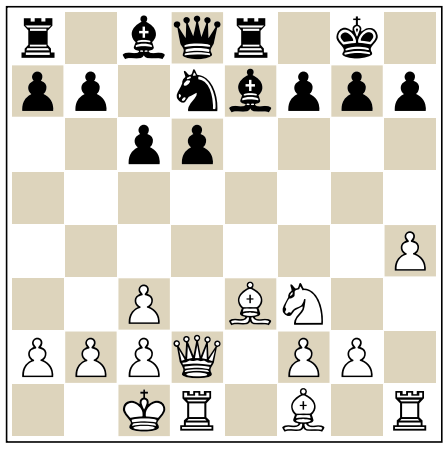
What a mess! 8.♗g5 ♕e8 9.♘h4+ ♔xg5 10.♘d2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

10...♔h6 (10...d6! 11.♘df3+ ♔g4 12.h3+ ♔g3, and Black is winning) 11.♘f5+ ♔g6 12.♘h4+ ♔h6 13.♘f5+ ♔g6 14.♘h4+, and draw, Short-Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

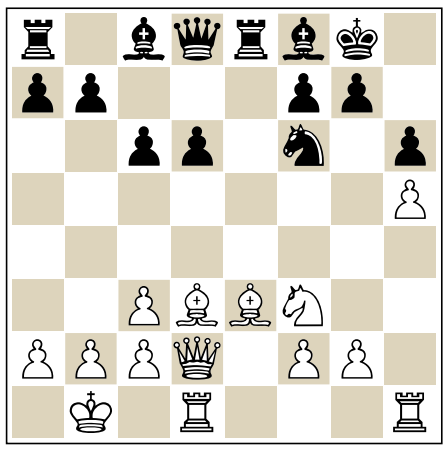
3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♖e8 10.h4 c6



11.h5

A deviation from the recent game Caruana-Kramnik played in Corus 2010, which went 11.♗d3 ♕a5 12.♔b1 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♕e2 ♗e6 15.♗c4 ♗xc4 16.♕xc4 ♖ad8 17.h5 ♖xd1+ 18.♖xd1 ♖d8, and Kramnik cruised towards an easy draw. (In his modesty Jan Smeets forgets to mention that the new move in this game was his idea – ed.)

11...h6 12.♔b1 ♘f6 13.♗d3 ♗f8



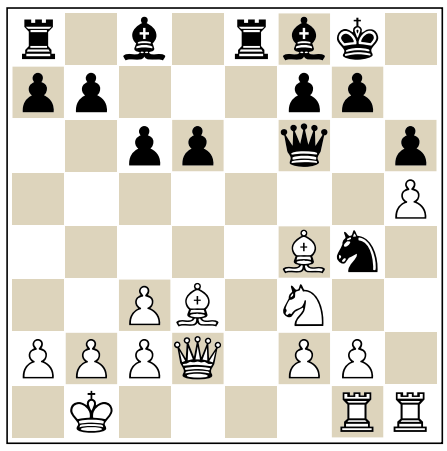
14.♖dg1!?

No subtle manoeuvring in this game! Veselin is aiming for a quick g4-g5.

14...♘g4

Blocking the fearsome g-pawn.

15.♗f4 ♕f6



16.♘h2!

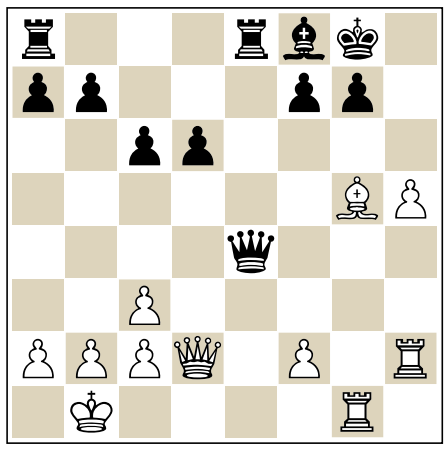
Of course, White prefers to keep as many pieces as possible on the board, but the pawn needs to advance.

16...♘xh2 17.♖xh2 ♗f5

By exchanging more pieces Black reduces White's attacking potential.

18.♗xf5 ♕xf5 19.g4 ♕e4 20.g5 hxg5 21.♗xg5

Things are starting to look a bit scary. Clearly, Black should have improved earlier on, but I will leave answering the question of where and when up to you, my dear readers.



21...♕e2? This appears to force the queen to c1.

22.♕xe2

Surely the endgame must be good for Black?

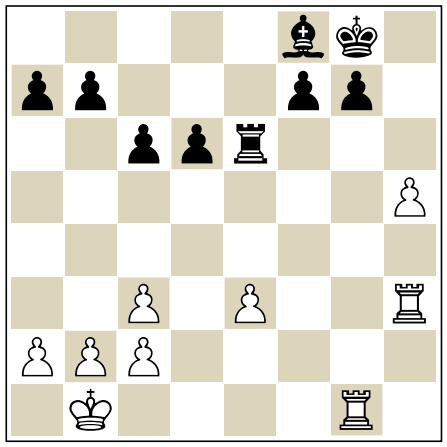
22...♖xe2 23.♗e3

Trapping the rook and planning to collect it with ♔c1-d1.

23...♖xe3

In case of 23...♖e8 White will have to go 24.♖h3, but the e2 rook will be unable to escape its destiny.

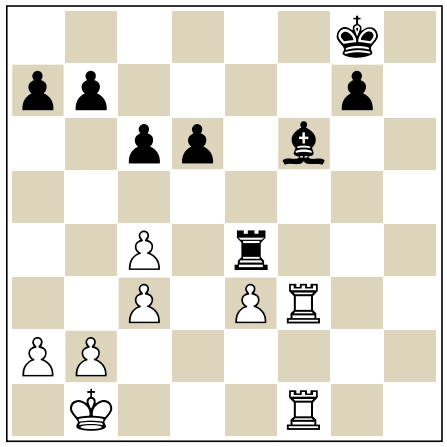
24.fxe3 ♖e8 25.♖h3 ♖e6



With such a bad pawn structure, care is still required. Black is dreaming about a bishop on e5, followed by ...♔h7-h6 or attacking the h- and e-pawns with his rook.

26.c4 ♗e7 27.♖f3 ♖e5 28.♖gf1 ♖xh5 29.♖xf7 ♖e5 30.♖7f3 ♗f6 31.c3 ♖e4

Watching the game 'live' (on the world wide web), I felt that Topalov had lost track during the last couple of moves and should have started by bringing his king to the centre. However, now, after 32.♖d1, White keeps things under control, as after 32...♗e5 33.c5! d5 34.♖g1 Black has no moves and his bishop no safe squares.



32.♖xf6?!

What is this?!? The assessment changes from technically winning to practical chances at best. Sounds like a bad deal to me.

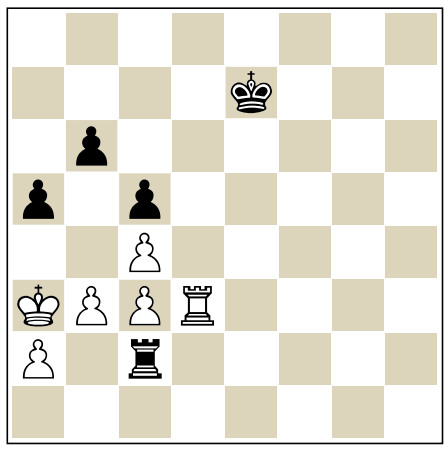
32...gxf6 33.♖xf6 ♖xe3 34.♖xd6 ♔f7!

Boris is not afraid of the pawn ending, and rightly so. With his king able to reach e5 all is fine, and even if the white king gets to e4, it can wait on e6-f6.

35.♔c2

Not the most dangerous try, as the king will only cause trouble in front of the pawns.

35...♖e2+ 36.♔b3 ♔e7 37.♖d4 c5 38.♖d3 b6 39.♔a3 ♖c2 40.♖d5 a5 41.♖d3 ♖h2 42.b3 ♖c2



43.♔a4 After some quiet moves White now plays his last trump.

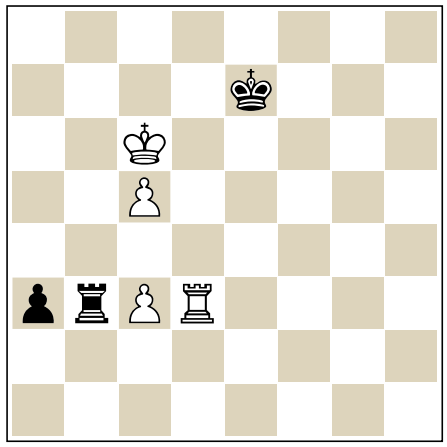
43...♖xa2+ 44.♔b5 ♖b2 45.♔xb6 a4 46.♔xc5 ♖xb3

46...a3! forces an immediate draw.

47.♔c6 a3 48.c5

NEW IN CHESS

Veselin Topalov looks relaxed at the start of the all-decisive last-round game against Boris Gelfand.



Things are getting a little tricky for Black, as exchanging the a- and c-pawns no longer draws. White is advancing while the black king is on the 'wrong side'.

48...♔e8?

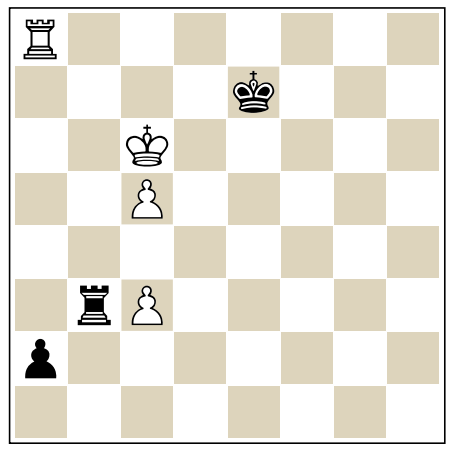
This may not be the losing move, but it is definitely a step in the wrong direction.

48...♔e6 49.♖e3+ looks a bit clumsy, but 48...♔f6 is an easy way to draw, as White has no way to get his rook behind the black passer.

49.♖h3 a2?

Allowing the rook behind the pawn. He would still have drawn after 49...♔e7!, when White's only chance is to sac c3 and push c5. Black will then have to give his rook, but assisting his a-pawn with the king he will save the day. A sample line is: 50.♖h8 ♖xc3 51.♖a8 ♔e6 52.♖a5 ♔e5 53.♔d7 ♔d4 54.c6 ♔c4 55.c7 ♔b3, with a draw.

50.♖h8+ ♔e7 51.♖a8



Game over.

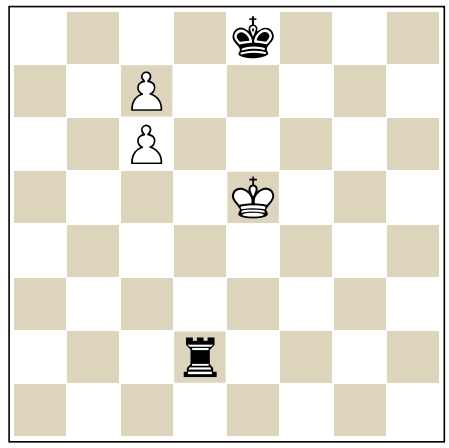
51...♖b2

51...♖xc3 52.♖xa2 ♔d8 53.♖a8+ ♔e7 54.♖c8 is elementary.

52.♔c7 ♖c2 53.c6 ♖b2 54.c4 ♖c2 55.♖a6 ♖b2 56.c5 ♔e6 57.♖a5! ♖c2 58.♔b7 ♖b2+ 59.♔c8 ♔e7 60.c7 ♔e8

61.♖xa2!

A nice finishing touch. Just for curiosity's sake, let's see what would happen after 61.c6 ♔e7 62.♖a3! ♔e8 63.♖xa2 ♖xa2 64.♔b7 ♖b2+ 65.♔a6 ♖a2+ 66.♔b6 ♖b2+ 67.♔c5 ♖c2+ 68.♔d5 ♖d2+ 69.♔e5

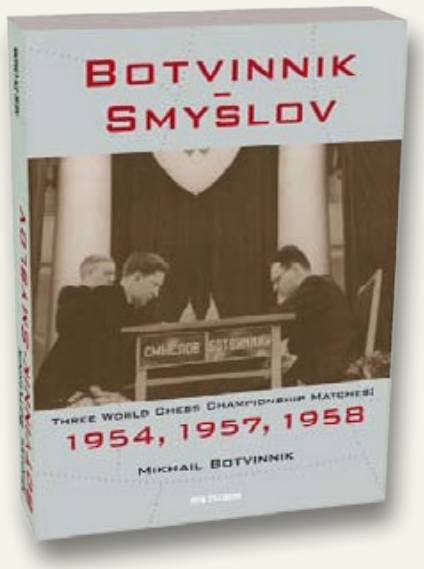


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

69...♖e2+ (the inventive 69...♖d8 doesn't help either: 70.cxd8♕+ ♔xd8 71.♔d6, and the pawn queens) 70.♔f4 ♖f2+ 71.♔e3, and now the point of 62.♖a3 is revealed. With the king on e7 there would be the somewhat embarrassing 71...♖f8. Time to reveal that on move 62 Black had several drawing moves, the nicest of which was 62...♔d6 63.♔d8 ♖h2!.

61...♖xa2 62.♔b7

Black resigned.



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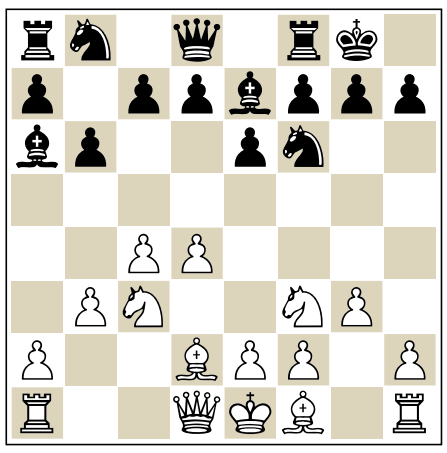
NOTES BY

Alexander Grischuk

QI 16.4 – E15
Alexander Grischuk
Veselin Topalov
Linares 2010 (9)

The situation was pretty clear before this game. With two rounds to go I was trailing Veselin by a whole point, so I had to win in order to fight for first place, even though my second, Denis Khismatullin, tried to remind me that I had something to lose as well.

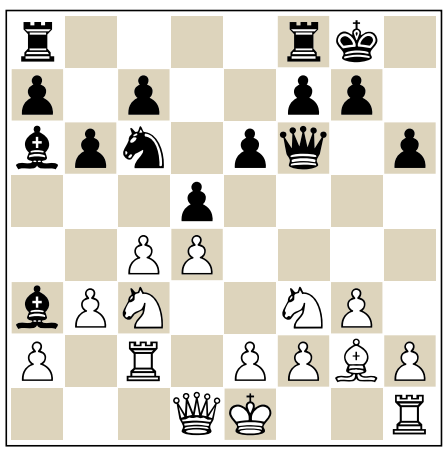
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.b3 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♘c3 0-0



8.♖c1

While commenting on this game I decided to check who played this move first (obviously I knew that Topalov made it popular), being fairly sure that the first game would be from the 1960s or '70s. Guess what? Topalov-Gelfand, 2004!

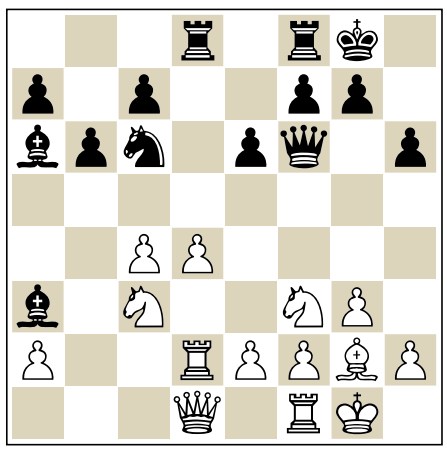
8...♗a3 9.♖c2 ♘c6 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♗g2 d5



13.0-0!

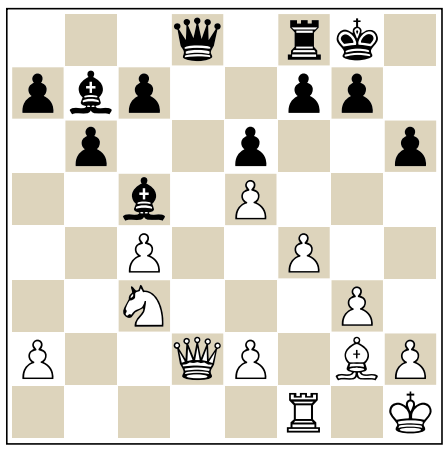
Luckily I have this move. After 13.cxd5 ♘b4 14.♖d2 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 exd5 16.0-0 ♖fe8 White doesn't risk anything trying to go for the win.

13...dxc4 14.bxc4 ♖ad8 15.♖d2



15...♗b4?

Not really a mistake, but with the more accurate 15...♗b7 Veselin could more or less have finished the tournament. I don't see anything better for White than the following long line: 16.♘e5 (on 16.♕b3 Black goes 16...♗e7 17.♕b2 ♘a5; on 16.e3 he is fine after 16...♘a5 17.♘e5 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♗d6 19.f4 ♕e7; and 16.♕a4 is answered by 16...♗b4) 16...♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♕g5 18.f4 ♗c5+ 19.♔h1 ♖xd2 20.♕xd2 ♕d8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

21.♕xd8 (Black has no problems at all either after 21.♕c2 ♕a8 22.♗xb7 ♕xb7+ 23.♕e4 ♕a6) 21...♗xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♖xd8 23.♖d1 ♖xd1 24.♘xd1, with an endgame that is marginally better for Black, but drawish.

16.♕b3

Now we have a fight on our hands.

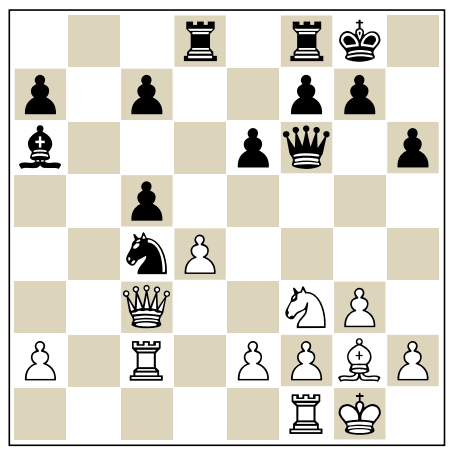
16...♗xc3

Black goes for the most forcing line. He had other possibilities too, for example: 16...♗b7 17.♖fd1 ♗e7 (or 17...♕e7).

17.♕xc3 ♘a5 18.c5

In case of 18.♘e5 Black is totally fine after 18...c5.

18...♘c4 19.♖c2 bxc5



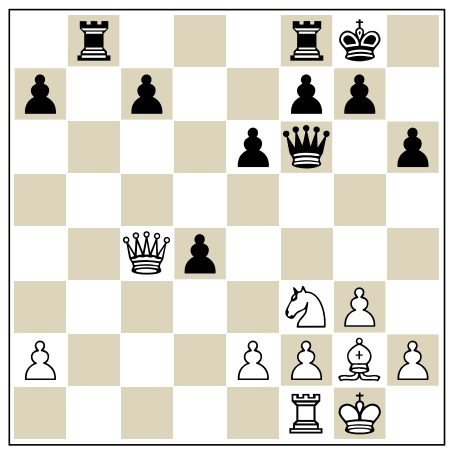
20.♕b3

Completely harmless is 20.dxc5 ♕xc3 21.♖xc3 ♘d2 22.♖e1 ♘xf3+ 23.♗xf3 ♗b5. While for 20.♖fc1 cxd4 21.♕d3, which Denis showed me after the game, you can get a lifetime ban, according to the new FIDE rules.

20...cxd4

It's too late to start going backwards. After 20...♘d6 21.♕a3 ♗b7 22.♖xc5 (less convincing is 22.♕xc5 ♗xf3 23.♗xf3 ♘f5) 22...♗xf3 23.♗xf3 ♕xd4 24.♖fc1 White has a pleasant advantage.

21.♖xc4 ♖b8! 22.♕c2 ♗xc4 23.♕xc4

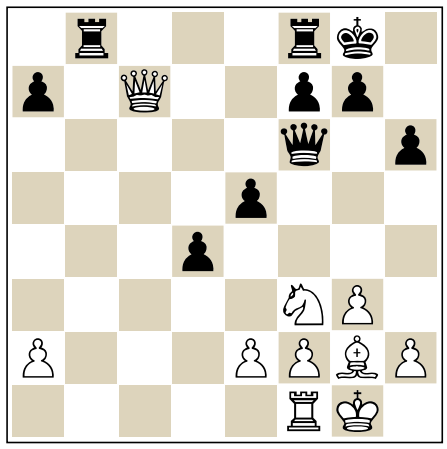


The forced play has finished and it's time to look at the position.

White has the upper hand, but I believe that with precise play Black should be able to draw the game.

23...e5 23...a5 was an alternative.

24.♕xc7



24...♖fe8?

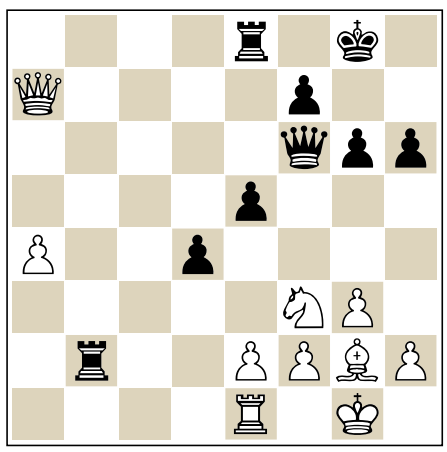
A clear mistake. Black just gives up a pawn, and now White gets a large advantage.

After both 24...e4 25.♘d2 ♕a6 26.♗xe4 ♕xe2 27.♕f4 d3 and 24...♖b2 25.♘xe5 ♖xe2 26.f4 (or 26.♘d3 ♖xa2) 26...d3 27.♗f3 ♖xa2 28.♗d5 ♖c2 29.♕xa7 d2 Black has good chances to survive.

25.♕xa7 ♖b2 26.♖e1

Crude but effective.

26...g6 27.a4



27...♖d8?!

Now that each side has made a useful move, Black has to do something. The text move starts a forced sequence, which turns out to favour White.

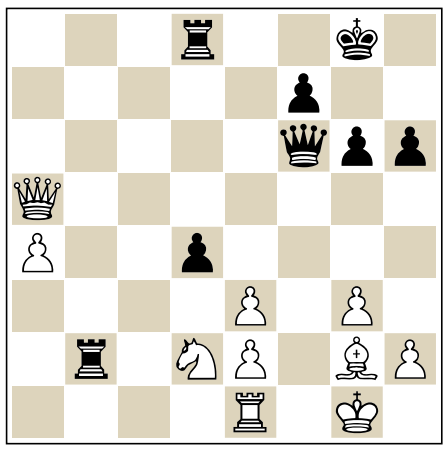
The natural 27...♖a2 to keep the a-pawn under attack would run into 28.♘h4! ♕d6 29.♗e4, and White manages to bring his bishop into play.

NEW IN CHESS

With a fine win over Veselin Topalov in Round 9, Alexander Grischuk brought back the tension. 'Alas, as the last round showed, not enough!'

27...♕d6 was probably Black's best bet.

28.♕a5! e4 29.♘d2 e3 30.fxe3

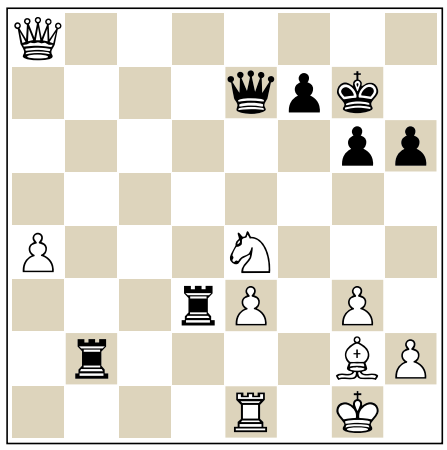


30...d3!

Several commentators have criticized this move, but wrongly so. True, 30...dxe3 might objectively be more tenacious, but after 31.♘e4 ♕d4 32.♗f3 ♖c2 (32...♖a2 33.♘c3) 33.♖b1 ♖c4 34.♔g2 ♖xa4 35.♕c7 White has a material advantage, the initiative and a completely safe king, and so should win without particular difficulty.

After the text-move, however, the situation is much more complicated, as the white king is weakened and Black gets counterplay.

31.♘e4 ♕e7 32.exd3 ♖xd3 33.♕a8+ ♔g7



34.♕c6?

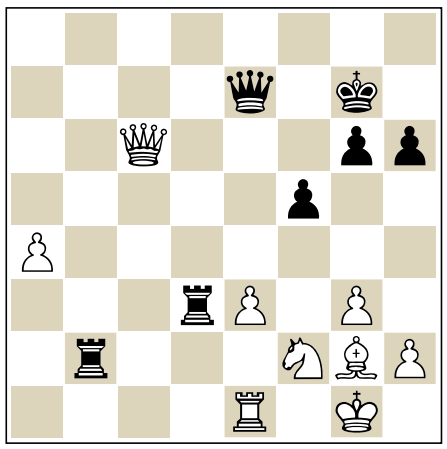
This mistake has an unusual explanation. When Veselin started to think after 28.♕a5 I calculated till 32...♖d3, and then for some reason continued the variation with 33.♕a5-c8+ ♔g7 34.♕c4, winning. So when we arrived at this position and I noticed that my planned 33rd move was illegal I started to feel a bit lost and made the most 'solid' move.

Still, it's not that easy to find the right way: 34.♗f1! ♖a3 (34...♖d8 35.♕c6 is hopeless) 35.♕d5 ♖xa4 36.♗c4, sacrificing a pawn, but, as the computer indicates, gain-

ing decisive activity, for instance: 36...♖bb4 37.♘d6 ♖b8 38.♕c6 and 39.♗xf7.

34...f5! 35.♘f2

I am not sure what exactly I missed when I played 34.♕c6, but after seeing 35.♘c5 ♖dd2 36.♗d5?? ♕xe3+!! (otherwise White wins) I didn't hesitate and put the knight closer to the king.

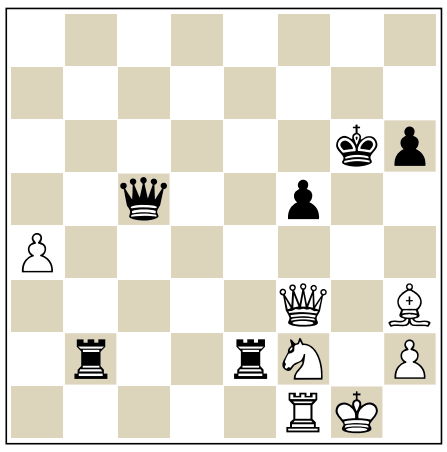


35...♖dd2??

This mistake is hard to explain. Maybe Black had missed my next move?

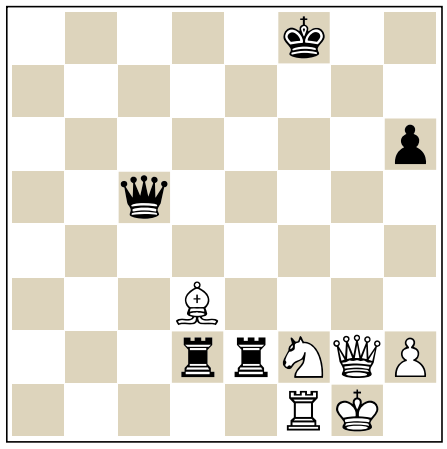
Correct was 35...♖xe3, and although after 36.♖f1 (36.♖xe3 ♕xe3 37.♕c7+ ♔f6 38.♕d6+ ♔g7 39.♕c7+ ♔f6 is an immediate draw) 36...♖ee2 37.♗d5 ♖bd2 38.♗c4 ♖e1 White keeps an edge, I think Black should be able to make a draw.

Interesting variations arise after 36...♕a7 (instead of 36...♖ee2): 37.g4 ♖ee2 38.gxf5 gxf5 39.♕c3+ ♔h7 40.♕f3 ♕c5 41.♗h3 ♔g6, and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– 42.a5 ♕xa5 43.♕g3+ ♔h7 44.♕d3 ♖bd2 45.♗xf5+ ♔h8 46.♕f3 ♕c5 47.♕a8+ ♔g7 48.♕g2+ ♔f8 49.♗d3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

49...♖xf2 (49...♖xd3 50.♔h1 is a nice trap) 50.♖xf2+ ♕xf2+ 51.♕xf2+ ♖xf2 52.♔xf2 ♔g7, and although Rybka 3 gives +5, we know it is a draw;

– 42.♗xf5+! ♕xf5 43.♕xf5+ ♔xf5 44.♘d3+, with some winning chances.

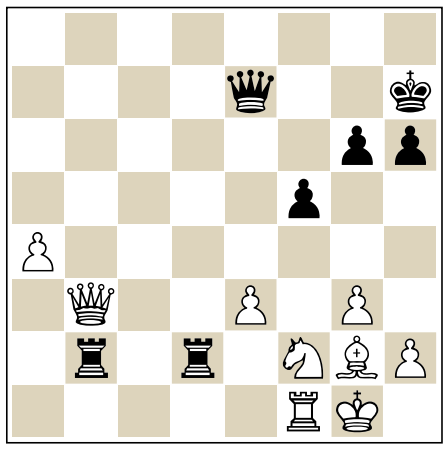
36.♕c3+

Now White is winning again.

36...♔h7 37.♖f1 ♖bc2

It was smarter to play 37...h5, since the text pushes the white queen towards the ideal square f4 and also makes it easier for me to get to the time-control.

38.♕b3 ♖b2 39.♕c3 ♖bc2 40.♕b3 ♖b2



41.♕c4! h5

Of course, 41...♕xe3 loses immediately: 42.♕f7+ ♔h8 43.♕f8+ ♔h7 44.♗d5! ♖xd5 45.♕f7+ ♔h8 46.♕xd5.

42.♕f4

42.a5!? was a decent alternative. White threatens to play a5-a6 and ♗g2-b7, so Black is forced to do something quickly, but after 42...♖bc2 43.♕f4 ♕a7 44.♗f3 ♕xa5 45.♘e4!! fxe4 46.♕f7+ ♔h6 47.♗xe4 White wins 'in style'.

42...♖e2?!

Missing his last chance, but 42...♕d6 43.♕xd6 ♖xd6 44.e4 is also pretty hopeless. It is important that the endgame 'bishop + knight + g-pawn vs rook' is winning for White.

43.♗f3 ♖ec2

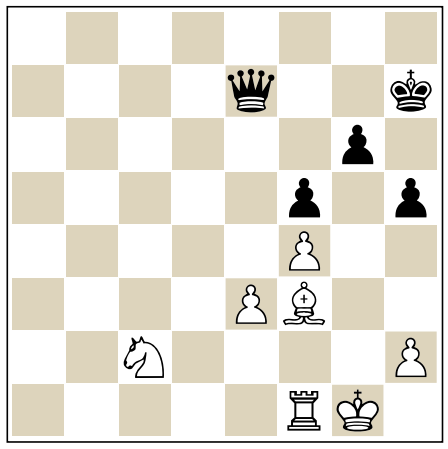
And not 43...♖xe3? in view of 44.♘d1. However, 43...♖b4 44.♕xb4 44...♕xb4 45.♗xe2 ♕xa4 was more stubborn.

44.♘d3 ♖a2

If 44...♖b3 then 45.♗d1.

45.♘b4 ♖xa4 46.♘xc2 ♖xf4 47.gxf4

Etienne Bacrot, who called me the evening after the game, criticized this move, trying to convince me that 47.exf4 was better. Finally, getting tired arguing with me, he said: 'Well, you won in a couple of moves after gxf4, so it can't be too bad!'



47...♔h6 The only chance for Black to create a fight is to play ...g6-g5 and then, after the pawn swap, go ...f5-f4. This is clearly unachievable, though.

48.♖b1 ♕e6 49.♖e1 ♕a2 50.♘d4 h4 51.♗e2 g5 52.fxg5+ ♔xg5 53.♖f1 ♔g6 54.♖xf5 ♕b1+ 55.♖f1 ♕e4 56.♔f2

Black resigned.

Not the most impressive game, obviously, but it had a lot of sporting importance. Unfortunately, as the last round showed, not enough!

NEW!

Opening Encyclopaedia 2010

The ChessBase Opening Encyclopaedia is the extensive collection of surveys and articles on all areas of the opening. The Encyclopaedia contains all 506 articles on theory from past ChessBase Magazines (prepared in every case by grandmasters and specialists in each specific opening), 4750 opening surveys covering all areas, 500 of which have been brought up to date or completely re-written for the new edition. In addition there is a database containing over 3.6 million games, of which approx. 80.000 are annotated. For the latest edition certain areas have been completely re-worked, e.g. Benoni, Sicilian Richter-Rauzer Variation, and the Bogo- and Queen's Indian.

Opening Encyclopaedia 2010 99,90 €

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Daniel King: Powerplay 13 – The stranglehold

What is a stranglehold? It is when during a game you are in control, deprive your opponent of all possible counterplay and slowly squeeze the life out of him. The motto of the stranglehold could be: "The highest form of ability is not the winning of a hundred victories in a hundred battles. It is the ability to overcome your enemy without a battle". (Sun Tzu, Chinese general, born approx. 500 BC). Throughout the whole DVD specially selected positions time and again offer you the opportunity to test your knowledge of the subject. Video running time: 5 hours.

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Nigel Davies: French Defence Strategy

The French Defence is a first-class candidate for your opening repertoire, especially for players who are not in the first flush of youth and who lack the time for extensive study. Black's solid setup highlights the positional understanding of players and is quite immune to sharp and trick-laden variations. On his new DVD Nigel Davies explains the strategy behind the French Defence by investigating typical pawn structures and going into the plans and ideas for both sides. The various plans are then demonstrated by means of especially apposite games. That allows the viewer not only to improve his understanding of the opening step by step but also to enjoy entertaining and creative chess all the time that he is doing so. Total running time: 4 hours.

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Nigel Davies: Build a 1.d4 Repertoire

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Alexei Shirov: Sicilian Najdorf 6.Bg5

There are very few openings which have experienced such a rapid and turbulent renaissance as has the Najdorf Variation with 6.Bg5. Since Radjabov's victories over Anand and Karjakin in 2006 a plethora of games have been played in this variation, with the concomitant development of opening theory. Alexei Shirov's explanations are all the more valuable because they come from a player who has contributed his own considerable part to the development of this opening. Total running time: over 5 hours.

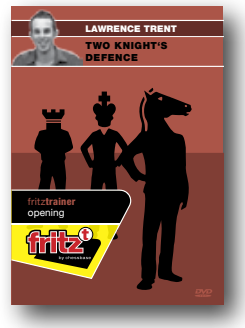
32,90 €

Andrew Martin: Spanish Exchange Variation

The Spanish Exchange Variation is based on a very simple idea: if all the pieces are exchanged, then White will win the pawn ending. Of course, applying this plan is anything but simple, because in return for his doubled c-pawns Black obtains the bishop pair and free play for his pieces. But nevertheless, it is always helpful to have before your eyes a clear goal. Bobby Fischer was probably the player who had the strongest influence on the move 4.Bxc6. That is because he managed to demonstrate that dynamic potential is present for White too and so he does not always have to keep aiming for an endgame.

27,50 €

Lawrence Trent: Two Knight's Defence



Many of those who play 1.e4 spend half of their chess life searching for a weapon against 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 which is reliable and at the same time sharp. The young English IM Lawrence Trent on this DVD suggests an exciting extension to your repertoire. After 3.Bc4 and the classic reply 3...Nf6 he gets straight down to business with 4.Ng5. For all those who find the long and frequently sluggish variations of the Ruy Lopez too tiresome for their taste, Trent has delineated on this DVD (with its almost 5 hours of running time) an exciting new area where much still remains to be discovered.

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NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

BI 9.14 – A64
Levon Aronian
Veselin Topalov
Linares 2010 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘c3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0

Not counting rapid games, this position has occurred with me twice. Spraggett played 9...♘a6 against me, and Radjabov 9...♖e8 10.♘d2 b6. Both games turned out to be interesting, and in both I managed to win.

9...♖e8 10.♘d2

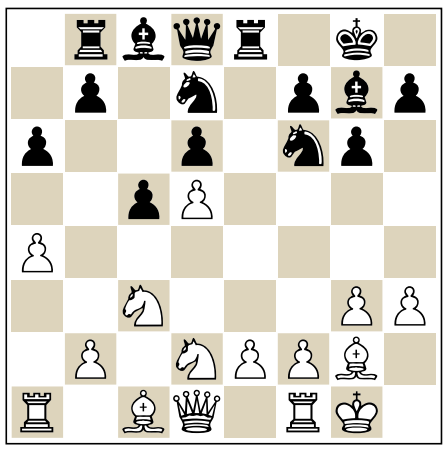
In recent times 10.♗f4 has been very popular. In a similar position (with the inclusion of the moves a4/...a6) I played this in a rapid game against Carlsen. 10.♘d2 was first employed by Capablanca against Marshall in 1927!

10...a6

This is the main variation. Sometimes Black tries to be cunning and manage without the move ...a6. For example, after 10...♘bd7 11.h3 ♘h5 the standard 12.♘c4 is not so strong, because of 12...♘e5, after which White has no convenient square for his knight, and he has to exchange it, which in this set-up usually favours Black.

11.a4 ♘bd7 12.h3 ♖b8

Black is threatening to play b5.



13.♘c4

The knight switches to the strange square a3, from where it controls b5. Something in the nature of an ode to Tarrasch, wouldn't you agree?

13.a5 is considered to be a bad idea, as after 13...b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 the rook on b8 finds work for itself.

13...♘b6

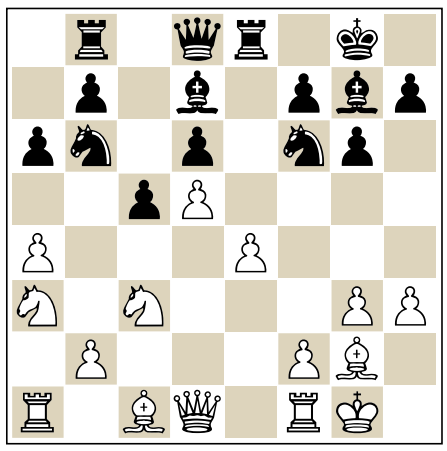
In my opinion, the variation 13...♘e5 14.♘a3 ♘h5 is stronger, but perhaps Veselin did not want to reveal his main weapon before the world championship match?

14.♘a3

Many strong players have retreated their knight to e3. Possibly I will play this in my next game.

14...♗d7 15.e4

A consolidating move, normal for this variation.



15...♘c8

I don't like this move, after which White has a free hand.

The waiting-cum-preparatory move 15...♕c7 is stronger. By preparatory, I have in mind the idea of sacrificing the knight on a4, which at the moment is not so strong because of 15...♘xa4 16.♘xa4 ♘xe4 (things are altogether dismal for Black after 16...b5 17.♘xc5 dxc5 18.♖e1) 17.♘c4 b5 18.♘xd6 ♘xd6 19.♘xc5, with advantage to White.

16.♕d3

After this move I realized that I had won the opening battle. Black has no real play, and all my pieces are well placed.

16...♖e7

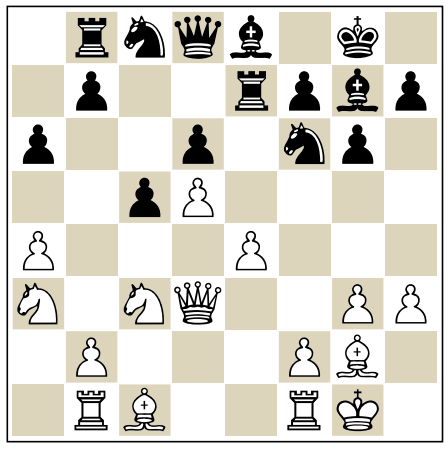
Veselin tries to regroup his men.

17.♖b1

I decided that, while the black pieces were strangely placed, it was time to act, and I decided to carry out the thematic b4.

17...♗e8

Black vacates the d7-square for his knight.



18.b4

Of course, there was no need to hurry, but I did not see any particular threat to myself. If I had been playing the game now, I would probably first have developed my pieces: 18.♗e3 or 18.♗f4 looks good.

18...cxb4 19.♖xb4 ♖c7

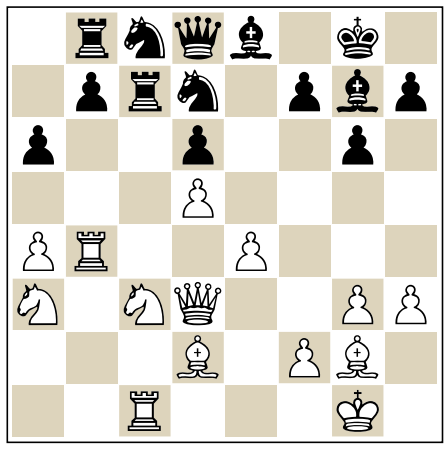
If 19...♘d7 White has a strong reply in the form of 20.♗g5. Since all the same White cannot prevent ...♘d7, Black first switches his rook to an active position.

20.♗d2

It was possible to provoke ...h6 by 20.♗g5, but in such cases an understanding of such subtleties doesn't come until after the game.

20...♘d7 21.♖c1

It is hard to avoid this move. Now practically all the pieces of both players are looking at the queenside.



21...♘c5

Apart from this natural move Black had the far from obvious resource 21...♖c5!. After 22.♗e3 the rook would appear to feel uncomfortable, but Black has a countermeasure in the form of 22...♕a5 23.♗xc5 ♘xc5 24.♕b1 ♘d3, with good play. Possibly White should prefer 22.♘c4 ♕c7 23.♘e2, with dynamic equality.

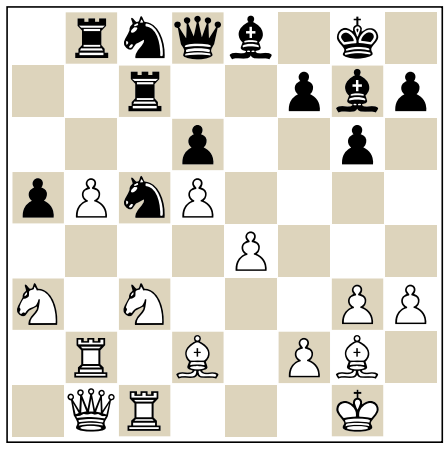
22.♕b1

After the game Veselin said that 22.♕f1 or 22.♕e2 seemed stronger to him, but since I didn't believe the idea with ...b5, it didn't seem necessary for me to keep the b1-square free for the rook on b4.

22...b5

This pawn sacrifice looks very sound. Now Black activates his knight on c8.

23.axb5 a5 24.♖b2



24...♘b6

An inaccuracy, which Veselin strongly criticized after the game. 24...a4 25.♗e3 ♘b3 26.♖xb3 axb3 27.♕xb3 ♘b6 would have led to an unclear position, which during the game I over-estimated, thinking that one of my knights would soon reach c6 via b4 or d4. This, of course, is more difficult to achieve than to plan.

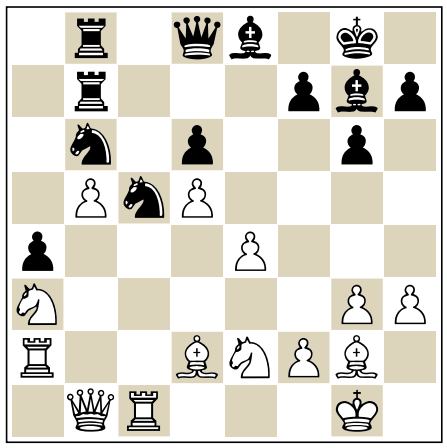
25.♖a2

Now White gains a big advantage without the need to give up anything.

25...a4 26.♘e2

Now from b3 the knight will not be attacking anything important.

26...♖cb7



27.♗f4

My opponent thought that 27.♗c3, exchanging the strong black bishop and giving White the d4-square, was stronger. It seemed to me that this exchange would make the knight at c5 too strong, but as my computer shows, both moves are good in their own way.

27...♘c8

If 27...♘b3, then 28.♖c6 is unpleasant. With ...♘c8 Black switches his knight to a7.

28.♖xc5

This was the idea of 27.♗f4.

28...dxc5 29.♗xb8 ♖xb8 30.f4

I thought that now my pawns would concertedly promote to a queen.

30...g5

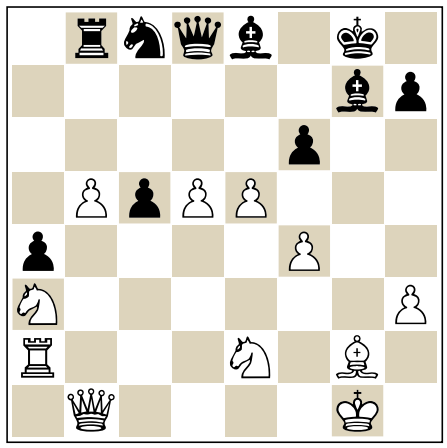
After losing their comrades in the centre, the wing pawns begin guerrilla tactics.

31.e5

If White does not hurry, Black even has the idea of ...h5-h4. I decided to fight for the centre, despite the loss of a pawn.

31...gxf4 32.gxf4 f6

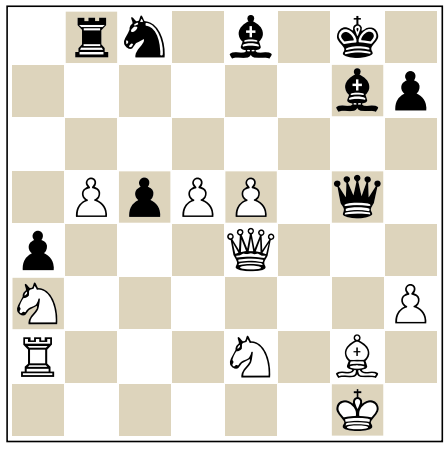
Continuing the just cause.



33.♕e4 Here it was still possible to forcibly consolidate my extra pawn by 33.e6, but I believed that I would be able to carry out the winning d6.

33...fxe5 34.fxe5 ♕g5

Black also had 34...♕e7, but after 35.♘c4 ♘b6 36.♘xb6 ♖xb6 37.♖xa4 ♗xe5 38.♖a6, despite the loss of his e5 pawn White is able to establish harmony among his forces, and he has every chance of winning.



35.♘c4

This looks correct, but, strangely enough, now the game heads for a draw. 35.e6 was still possible, but after not playing 33.e6 I somehow automatically rejected this possibility.

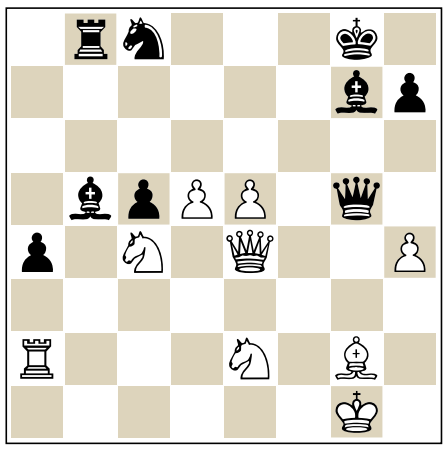
35...♗xb5 36.h4

A time scramble was approaching, and I was pinning all my hopes on this move.

Unfortunately, after 36.d6 ♗xc4 37.♕xc4+ ♔h8 the white king is too weak, while after 36.♖b2 a3 37.♘xa3 ♗d3 38.♕xd3 ♖xb2 39.♘c4 ♖a2 Black again acquires counterplay.

NEW IN CHESS

For their spectacular draw in Round 3, Veselin Topalov and Levon Aronian were awarded the beauty prize that consisted of 27 litres of olive oil. One bottle they received in Linares, the rest was sent to their homes.



36...♕g6

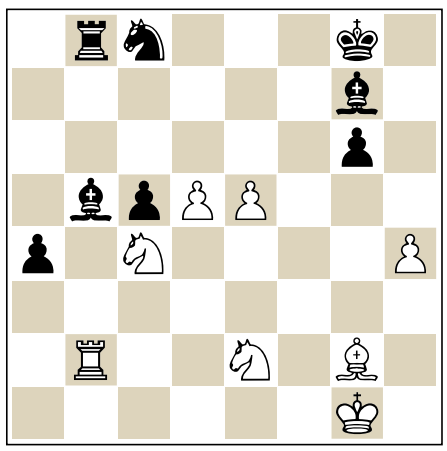
A very bold decision! I was expecting 36...♕d8, after which I was thinking of playing 37.♖b2 a3 38.♘xa3 ♗d3 39.♕xd3 ♖xb2 40.♘c4. Now 40...♖a2 is bad because of 41.d6 ♖a1+ 42.♗f1 and Black's attack does not succeed, but after the strong 40...♖b8 41.d6 ♘b6 he is quite alright.

37.♕xg6

A mistake. Not having much time for thought, I decided that the exchange of queens was bad for Black, and that I had to take on g6 before the queen ran away.

After 37.♖b2 a3 38.♘xa3 ♘d6 39.♕xg6 hxg6 40.♘c3 ♗xe5 41.♖xb5 ♘xb5 42.♘axb5 White would have retained winning chances.

37...hxg6 38.♖b2



38...♘d6

A brilliant combination, which my opponent admitted was absolutely intuitive. As Veselin remarked, 42...♗b2 was noticed only after the next few moves.

39.♘xd6 a3 40.♖a2

40.♖b3 is possible, but after 40...a2 41.♖a3 ♗xe2 42.♖xa2 ♗d3 the position remains drawn.

40...♗xe2 41.♖xe2 ♗xe5 42.♘c4 ♗b2 43.♘xa3

White makes an attempt to conclude the game with extra material.

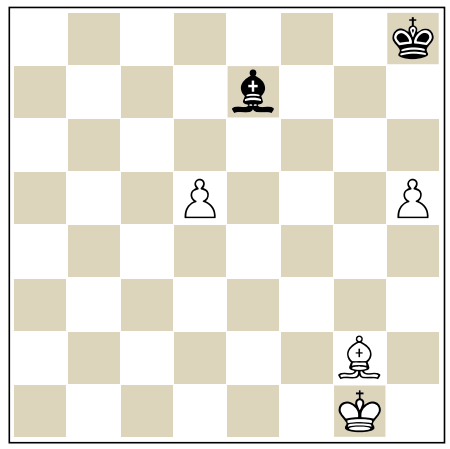
43...♗xa3 44.♖e6 c4

The simplest.

45.♖xg6+ ♔f7 46.♖c6

46.h5 ♖h8 47.♗f3 ♖g8 leads to the same result.

46...♖h8 47.♖c7+ ♔f8 48.♖xc4 ♗e7 49.♖c8+ ♔g7 50.♖xh8 ♔xh8 51.h5



And in this position, where I was two sound pawns to the good, I showed mercy. Draw agreed.

Ivanchuk and Carlsen steal the show

The 19th Amber Blindfold and Rapid tournament in Nice started with a bang when on the opening day Vasily Ivanchuk, the winner of the very first Amber tournament back in 1992, defeated this year's top-seed Magnus Carlsen 2-0. Who could have expected at this point that these two players would be locked in a captivating race that would remain exciting till the very last moment? Carlsen retaliated with seven consecutive wins, but this was not enough to shake off a determined Ivanchuk. With admirable will-power both Ivanchuk and Carlsen defeated their opponents in the final rapid session to share first place with an overall total of 14½ out of 22. Amber veteran **John Nunn** watched the action in the Palais de la Méditerranée and shares his impressions.

The Amber Tournament has been going for so long that it is hard to remember a time when the world's leading players did not gather in spring to battle it out in rapid and blindfold chess. The success of this event has been due to the long-running sponsorship by Mr and Mrs van Oosterom, who have steadfastly supported it since its inception in 1992. The table that you will find on page 44 gives the main facts about all 19 Amber tournaments.

For lovers of statistics, the name appearing most often in the list is that of Anand, with 18 occurrences, followed by Kramnik with 17. However, Kramnik has the most overall wins with 6 (including shared wins). A clean sweep of outright wins in all three events has only been achieved twice, in 1997 and 2005, both times by Anand.

The Amber tournament was originally suggested by Lev Polugaevsky to celebrate the birth of the Van Oosteroms' daughter Melody Amber. The first event, in 1992, was a bit of an experiment, but from 1993 to the present day

At he end of a captivating race, Magnus Carlsen and Vasily Ivanchuk shared overall first place in the 19th Amber Tournament. While the uncompromising Norwegian made only three draws, 'Mr. Amber' didn't lose a single one of his 22 games.

the format of the tournament has remained the same, a double-round event with one game of blindfold chess and one game of rapid chess. The time-limit has also remained pretty much constant: 25 minutes plus 20 seconds per move for the blindfold and 25 minutes plus 10 second per move for the rapid. There have been minor changes in the rules over the years; for example, at one time a player had to claim for a possible 50-move or threefold repetition draw in the blindfold, but now the computer declares such draws automatically. However, in all major aspects the rules have remained the same.

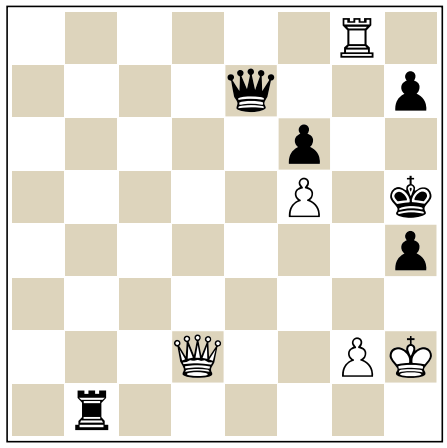
The basic system for the operation of the blindfold game has also become standardised. Each player sits in front of a computer screen which displays a blank chessboard. A player makes a move by clicking with the mouse on the starting and finishing squares for the move, or he can type in the move using the keyboard. When he makes his move it appears on his opponent's screen. The only move visible on the screen is the last move played. An important point is that the player must know where the piece he wants to move currently stands. Even if he knows he wants to play ...♕a1, he still has to enter

(by mouse or keyboard) the starting square, for example ...♕a7-a1. On one occasion I was trying to draw a queen ending a pawn down against Vishy Anand and after he played 100.♔a3, I recalled that I intended to play 100...♕a6+, but I was so tired I had forgotten where my queen was. I had to try entering various moves, such as ....♕b7-a6+ and ...♕c6-a6+ before eventually discovering that my queen was on b5 (the game was drawn in 117 moves). There is no penalty for attempting to play an illegal move other than the waste of time involved. Grischuk's only loss in this year's blindfold event was caused by a similar problem. He wanted to play ...♕xb5 against Aronian but had forgotten where his queen was; while he was trying to find it, he lost on time. After a player has made a move, if it's a check or a capture then the computer adds the appropriate symbol. Many players have stared horrified at the screen as a move which they thought was a capture turned out not to be (or vice versa).

In the early years computer malfunctions were relatively commonplace. On these occasions, it was necessary to switch to a manual system. This involved the chief arbiter (who has been Geurt Gijssen for all 19 tournaments) grabbing any GMs who happened to be hanging around the press room, and getting them to check the legality of the moves by following the game on a pocket set. On these occasions the players would indicate the move they wanted to play by writing it down on a piece of paper. This system worked surprisingly well, although one game was thrown into confusion after the distinguished GM tracking the moves on his pocket set repeatedly declared a move illegal, but upon closer examination it turned out that he had less idea of the position than the players who were conducting the game blindfold.

The increasing reliability of the computer systems led to the gradual disappearance of these episodes, although I still take my pocket set to the Amber tournament just in case.

There have also been various software bugs, which generally involved a legal move being declared illegal, as in the following case.



Piket-Topalov
Monte Carlo Amber blindfold 2000 (2)

Here White played **43.g4+** and, to Topalov's surprise, his only legal move **43...hxg3+** was declared illegal by the computer, which left him in a bit of a quandary. The problem was eventually resolved with some manual intervention and the game ended **44.♖xg3 ♕e5 45.♕d7 ♕e2+ 46.♖g2**

Amber Tournament history

No	Year	Venue	Overall winner	Rapidplay winner	Blindfold winner
1	1992	Vista Palace Hotel, Roquebrune	Ivanchuk	* note 1	* note 1
2	1993	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Ljubojevic	Ljubojevic	Anand, Karpov
3	1994	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Anand	Anand, Kramnik	Anand
4	1995	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Karpov	Karpov	Kramnik
5	1996	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Kramnik	Anand, Ivanchuk	Kramnik
6	1997	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Anand	Anand	Anand
7	1998	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Shirov, Kramnik	Ivanchuk, Shirov	Kramnik
8	1999	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Kramnik	Anand	Kramnik, Shirov, Topalov
9	2000	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Shirov	Shirov	Kramnik
10	2001	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Kramnik, Topalov	Gelfand, Kramnik	Topalov
11	2002	Metropole Palace Hotel, Monaco	Morozevich	Gelfand	Morozevich
12	2003	Vista Palace Hotel, Roquebrune	Anand	Bareev	Kramnik
13	2004	Fairmont Hotel, Monaco (* note 2)	Morozevich, Kramnik	Anand	Morozevich
14	2005	Fairmont Hotel, Monaco	Anand	Anand	Anand
15	2006	Fairmont Hotel, Monaco	Anand, Morozevich	Anand	Morozevich
16	2007	Fairmont Hotel, Monaco	Kramnik	Anand	Kramnik
17	2008	Palais de la Méditerranée Hotel, Nice	Aronian	Aronian	Aronian, Kramnik, Morozevich, Topalov
18	2009	Palais de la Méditerranée Hotel, Nice	Aronian	Anand, Aronian, Kamsky	Aronian, Carlsen, Kramnik
19	2010	Palais de la Méditerranée Hotel, Nice	Carlsen, Ivanchuk	Carlsen, Ivanchuk	Grischuk

1. There was no blindfold chess in the 1992 tournament, which consisted of a double-round rapid event.
2. This is the current name of the hotel. In 2004 it was called the 'Monte Carlo Grand'.

NEW IN CHESS

Amber class of 2010: Leinier Dominguez, Levon Aronian, Boris Gelfand, Ruslan Ponomariov, Peter Svidler, Magnus Carlsen, arbiter Geurt Gijssen, Sergey Karjakin, Vladimir Kramnik, Jan Smeets, Vugar Gashimov, Alexander Grischuk and Vasily Ivanchuk.

♕e5+ ½-½. Software bugs still arose as late as 2009, but this year the software had been improved and the event was, as far as I know, bug-free.

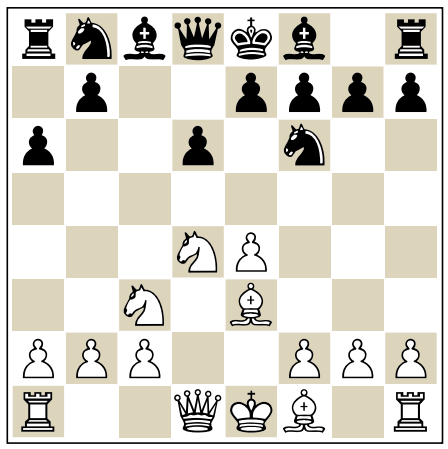
The list of participants for 2010 showed more changes than usual since Anand and Topalov were occupied preparing for their world championship match, while four other players from 2009 (Radjabov, Wang Yue, Leko and Kamsky) were dropped. Finally, Morozevich withdraw due to illness shortly before the tournament. The result was that there were four completely new faces in the Amber line-up (Gashimov, Ponomariov, Dominguez and Smeets, who qualified from last year's NH Hotels tournament in Amsterdam), and three players who were making a reappearance (Svidler, Grischuk and Gelfand). Before the start I thought that the most likely winners were Aronian, who had won in 2008 and 2009 and was now in line for a possible hat-trick, Kramnik, who had been first or joint first in six previous Amber tournaments, and of course Carlsen, ranked number one in the world.

This year's event proved to be one of the most exciting Amber tournaments I could remember. The lead changed hands several times and the final result was in doubt right up to the very last of the 22 rounds. A surprise was served up in the very first double round, when Magnus Carlsen lost 2-0 to Vasily Ivanchuk. Starting the blindfold game with 1.a3 may not have been such a good move for Carlsen (surely *that* wasn't what he has been working on with Kasparov?) and he was summarily crushed by the veteran who is the only player to take part in all 19 Amber tournaments. The day continued badly for Carlsen when Ivanchuk won an interesting battle in the Poisoned Pawn (now *that* sounds more like Kasparov's influence).

NOTES BY
Vasily Ivanchuk

SI 8.8 – B97
Vasily Ivanchuk
Magnus Carlsen
Nice rapid 2010 (1)

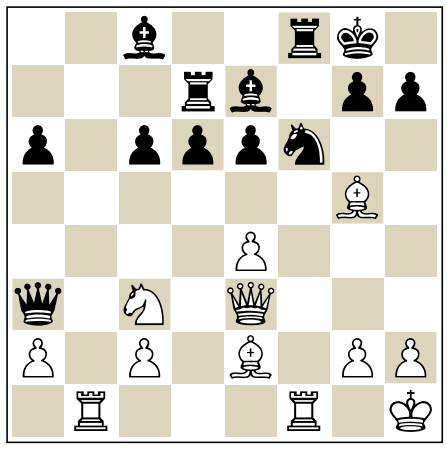
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3



6...♘g4 7.♗c1 ♘f6
Black's reply forced me to 'think again', and I found ♗g5 ☺.
8.♗g5 e6 9.f4 ♕b6 10.♕d2 ♕xb2 11.♖b1 ♕a3 12.f5 ♘c6 13.fxe6 fxe6 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♗e2 ♗e7 16.0-0 0-0 17.♔h1

All this is well known. I played 17.♖b3 against Kasparov in 1990, and I also played it later against Grischuk in the 7th round.

17...♖a7 18.♕e3 ♖d7



19.♖b8!?

A novelty. The idea is to tie Black down along the eighth rank, not allow him to play ...d6-d5, and place the queen on h3 in a number of variations.

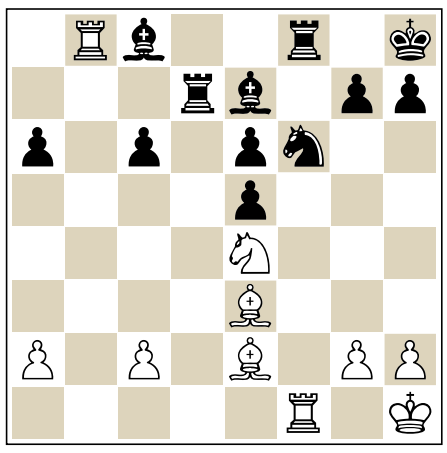
19...♔h8!

A prophylactic and correct reply. Black wants to play ...♖fd8 and exchange everything, remaining a pawn up.

20.e5!

Played after a long think. With this sacrifice of a second pawn, White's pieces become very active.

20...dxe5 21.♘e4 ♕xe3 22.♗xe3



Now, despite his two (!) extra pawns, Black is very passively placed. Of course, objectively the position is roughly equal, since all the black pawns are weak. White's pieces are exerting pressure, and I think that he is not risking anything in this position.

22...♖dd8

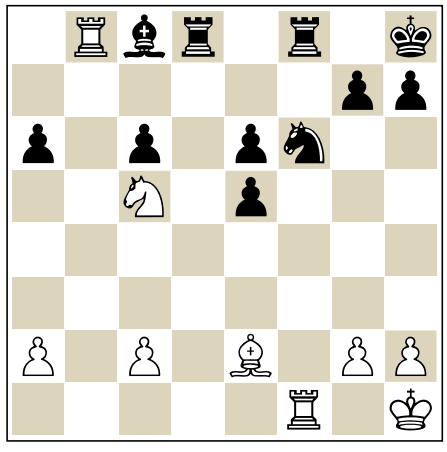
The correctness of the evaluation is confirmed by the fact that the computer makes the pointless move 22...♖g8.

23.♗c5!

With the exchange of the dark-squared bishop, the weaknesses become more perceptible.

23...♗xc5 24.♘xc5

Now the two extra pawns are of no importance. The white pieces dominate the board.



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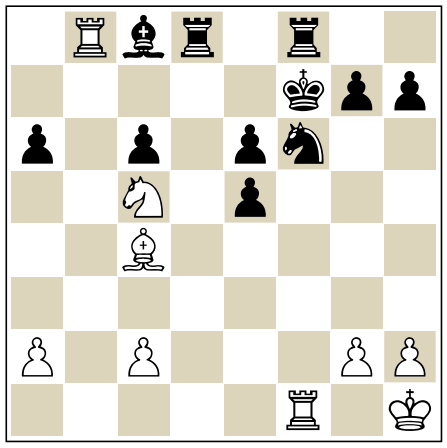
NEW IN CHESS

Co-winner Vasily Ivanchuk raises his glass (Badoit) to his Mexican second Manuel Leon Hoyos (Evian).

24...♔g8

Perhaps Black should have advanced his pawn with 24...e4 25.a4 e5 26.a5 e3, but it is not clear what he should do next after 27.h3.

25.♗c4! ♔f7



26.♖b6!

An important move. I spent a long time wondering which weakness to eliminate, a6 or e6, but in the end I realized that the weakness on c6 was the most important! It gives access to both of the others.

Bad is 26.♗xe6+? ♔e7!, exchanging the weak bishop on c8.

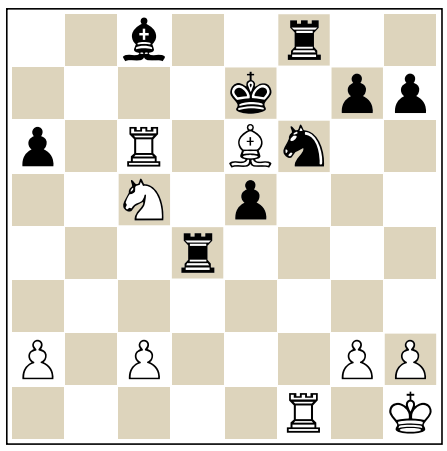
And Black wouldn't mind 26.♘d3?! ♔e7 27.♘xe5 ♔d6! either.

26...♖d4 27.♗xe6+ ♔e7

If 27...♔g6 then 28.♖xc6 and the knight on f6 cannot move. And 27...♗xe6 is met by 28.♖b7+! ♗d7 29.♘xd7.

28.♖xc6

Here I spent a long time calculating different variations, but apparently White has merely a small advantage.



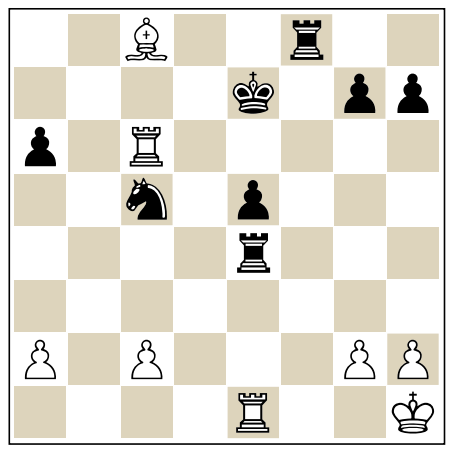
28...♘d7?!

Correct was 28...♗d7! 29.♘xd7 ♘xd7 30.♔g1 ♖xf1+ 31.♔xf1 ♘b8 32.♖b6 ♖d6 33.♖xd6 ♔xd6 34.♗g8,with a slight advantage for White.

29.♖e1!

An important nuance – now the e5 pawn is hanging.

29...♘xc5 30.♗xc8 ♖e4



31.♖c1!

The rook goes here, where it cannot be pursued and it defends the c2 pawn, which will become important in the subsequent play.

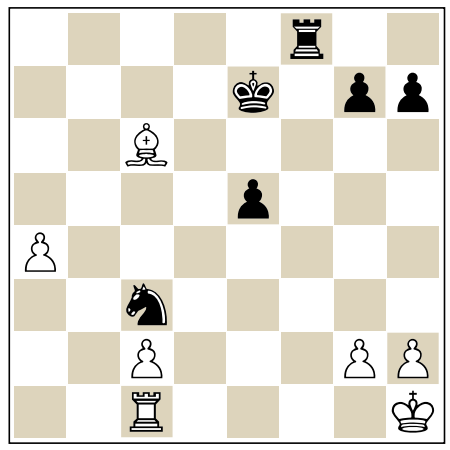
31...♖c4 32.♗xa6

Now Black is exactly one move too late and, what is most important, from a6 the bishop controls the f1-square!

32...♖c3 33.♗b5 ♘e4 34.a4

34.♔g1 ♖xc6 35.♗xc6 was weak in view of 35...♘c3!.

34...♖xc6 35.♗xc6 ♘c3



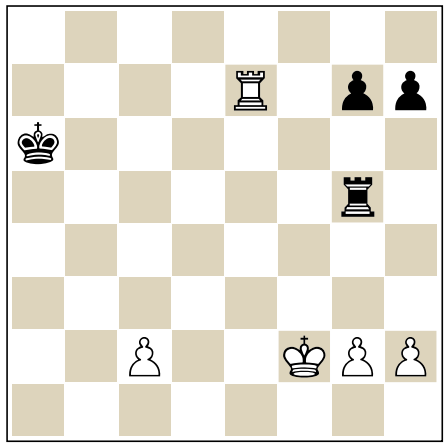
36.a5!

This pawn plays an important diversionary role. The price for it in the future will be very high.

36...♔d6 37.♗b7 ♔c7 38.a6 e4 39.♖e1 ♔b6 40.♔g1 ♖f5 41.♗xe4

41.♖e3 ♖c5 42.♖h3 h5 43.♔f2 ♘d5 44.c4 ♘f6 did not seem so clear, but after 45.♖c3 White should gradually win.

41...♘xe4 42.♖xe4 ♔xa6 43.♖e7 ♖g5 44.♔f2

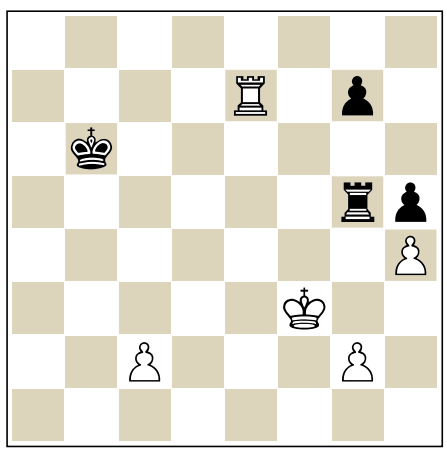


44...♔b6

More tenacious was 44...h5, although White wins after 45.h4! ♖g6 46.g3 ♔b6 47.♔g2 ♔c5 48.♖e5+ ♔d4 49.♖g5 ♖c6 50.♖xh5 ♖xc2+ 51.♔f3.

45.♔f3 h5 46.h4

A precise move, not allowing Black any chances.



46...♖f5+

If 46...♖g4 the most accurate is 47.♖e4! ♖g6 48.♖e5 ♖f6+ 49.♔e4, and White wins thanks to the activity of his king: 49...g6 50.g3 ♔c7 51.c4 ♔c6 (51...♔d7 52.♖a5!) 52.♖e8 ♔c5 53.♖c8+ ♔d6 54.c5+ ♔d7 55.♖g8 ♔c6 56.♔d4.

47.♔e4 ♖c5 48.g3 ♖c4+ 49.♔f5 g6+

And Black lost on time.

A number of key battles took place in Round 1, with Karjakin-Aronian and Grischuk-Kramnik both finishing 1-1. Looking back, Kramnik was most pleased with his rapid win.

NOTES BY

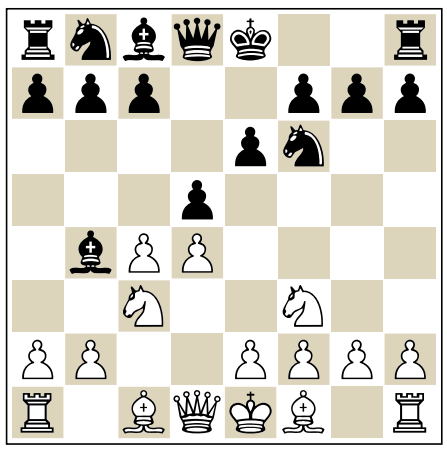
Vladimir Kramnik

NI 27.11 – D38
Vladimir Kramnik
Alexander Grischuk
Nice rapid 2010 (1)

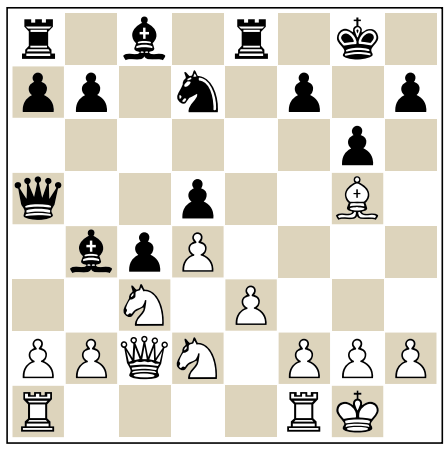
I believe that this was a good game from a professional point of view. Of course, we both committed some inaccuracies, but there were no serious mistakes, which is quite something for a tense rapid game. The game had a certain theoretical importance and we saw decent play from both sides. I could easily imagine this game being played under a classical time-control.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4

Lately I have had quite a lot of experience in this line with both colours. I started to play it myself as Black, but people also played it against me. After 4...♗b4, you'd call this opening the Ragozin Variation, but after 5.♗g5, Ragozin's intention, really, was 5...h6. And after 5...♘bd7 we are already in the Westphalia Variation. And this, of course, contains many good memories for me, as Westphalen is the part of Germany where Dortmund is (of course I know that the Westphalia Variation was named after the ship Westphalia, which took several participants in the 1927 New York tournament to the U.S., but let's not ruin my pleasant memories ☺).



5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♕c2 c5 8.e3 ♕a5 9.♗d3 c4 10.♗f5 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♘d2 g6 13.♗xd7 ♘xd7



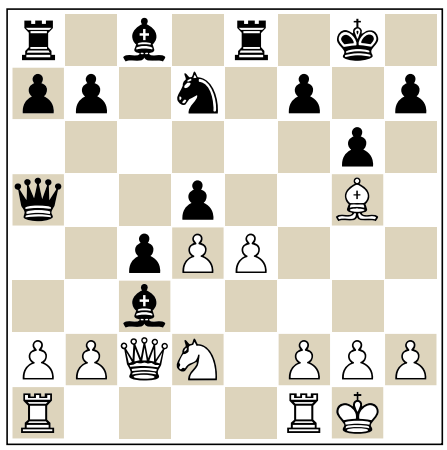
14.e4

This rare move was part of my special rapid chess preparation. I was not sure if it was serious enough for classical chess, but that's why it is nice to play in Nice every year, because it allows me to use all these rapid chess ideas. I think these days every player has rapid chess novelties in his or her repertoire, and maybe even blitz chess novelties. So when I am preparing for Nice I switch to rapid chess mode. I don't have a different database for these ideas, but a different compartment in my brain.

The idea of 14.e4 definitely caught Grischuk by surprise, as he started to think.

14...♗xc3

This is the main move, and probably the correct one. After 14...dxe4 there was one recent game in which White played 15.♘cxe4 and went on to win. But we (me and my friend here) think that 15.h4 is also quite interesting.



NEW IN CHESS

Vladimir Kramnik listens to Alexander Grischuk at the opening dinner. The next day the former World Champion defeated the current Russian champion in a rapid game that he was quite proud of.

15.♕xc3

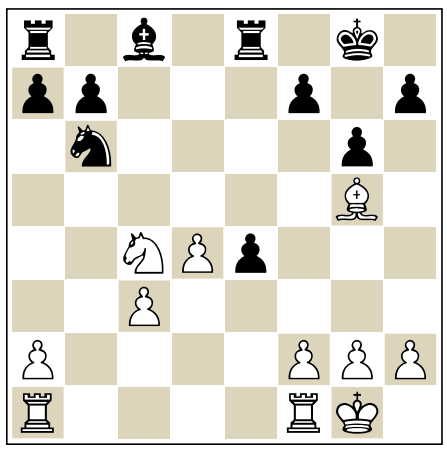
I have to exchange queens, because 15.bxc3 gives White nothing, in view of 15...dxe4, and I cannot use my temporary initiative, because the bishop on g5 is hanging.

15...♕xc3 16.bxc3 dxe4

Alexander thought that he was equalizing very easily with this move. As happens so often with games between top players, only a few days after our game another game was played in this line, Landa-Efimenko in the German Bundesliga, in which Black came up with the interesting idea of 16...f6!? (which I had also analysed), and now, after 17.♗h4 g5 18.♗g3 ♘b6, White played 19.f4, with sharp and complicated play. To which I can add that 19.f3 also comes into consideration.

17.♘xc4 ♘b6

17...b6 doesn't solve all of Black's problems, of course, because of 18.♘e3 ♗a6 19.c4, after which White sets up his pieces in the best possible positions and he definitely has an advantage because of his centre and better pieces.



18.♘d2!

A very important move, which Black had probably missed.

The 'natural' 18.♘e3 is met by 18...♗e6, and Black is just in time to block White's central pawns and will make a draw without too many difficulties.

After the text-move Black cannot play 18...♗e6 because the pawn on e4 is hanging, and White will be in time to push the pawn to c4, which gives him some pressure. Now Black has to be very careful not to end up in a very difficult position. This was still part of my preparation, when I concluded that White has a pleasant endgame and basically stopped looking further.

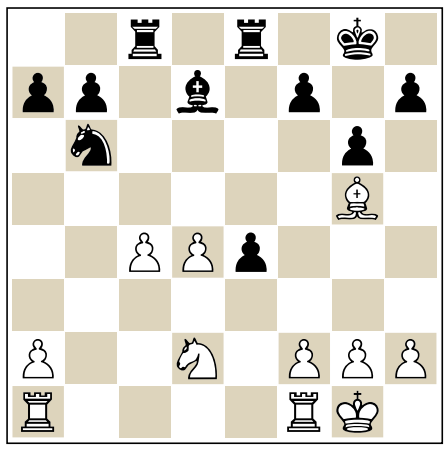
18...♗d7

Still, there was an important resource with which Black could have defended himself, but which Sasha missed: 18...f6.

The point is that now, after 19.♗xf6, he has 19...♘d5 20.♗e5 ♘xc3 21.♖fe1 ♗f5 22.♘c4. Of course, White retains a certain amount of pressure, but Black's drawing chances here are pretty good.

This was his best option, because after the text he ends up in quite serious trouble.

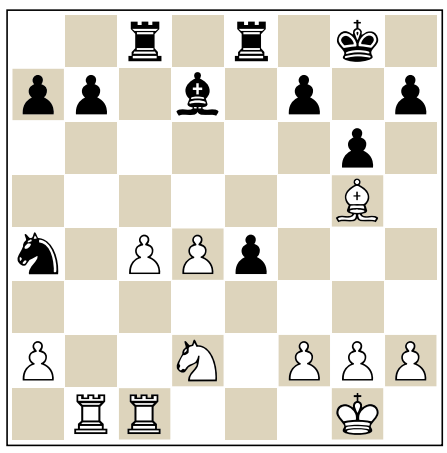
19.c4 ♖ac8



20.♖fc1

Now I think that, strangely enough, the best move was 20.♖fb1!?. From a human perspective it seems to lead to a complete exchange of pieces and a quick draw, but the more I checked it after the game, the more I realized that Black's position is actually quite unpleasant after 20...♘xc4 21.♖xb7 ♗c6 22.♖xa7 ♘xd2 23.♗xd2 ♖ed8 24.a4. I can even give up the pawn on d4, then I put my bishop on e3 and I start to march with my a-pawn. Basically, White is a pawn up, as Black's pawns on the kingside are blocked. With a very precise defence Black will probably manage to make a draw, but it's much more unpleasant than I thought during the game. But after the move I played in the game White also keeps nice pressure.

20...♘a4 21.♖ab1

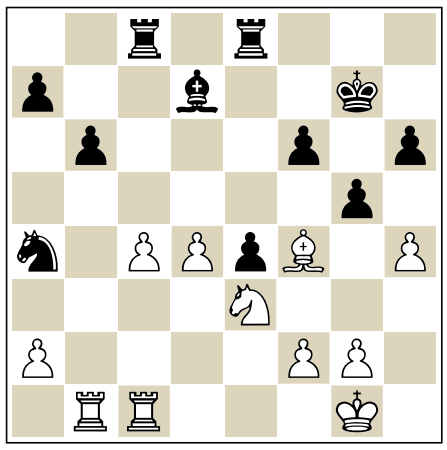


21...b6

Of course, very principled would have been to play 21...b5, but Black is just not in time to block White's pawns after 22.c5 a6 23.♘f1! ♗e6 24.♘e3, and White will push his pawns, after which Black's position is critical, e.g. 24...♗xa2 25.♖a1 ♗e6 26.d5.

22.♘f1 ♔g7 23.h4 f6 24.♗f4 h6 25.♘e3 g5

The past few moves were quite logical and didn't require any comment. White is putting his pieces in the best possible positions and Black is pushing his pawns on the kingside to create some kind of counterplay. Now comes an important moment.

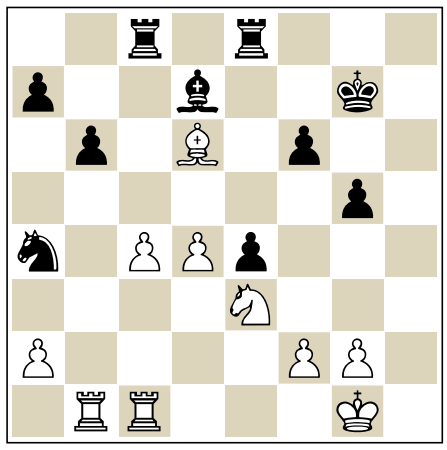


26.hxg5

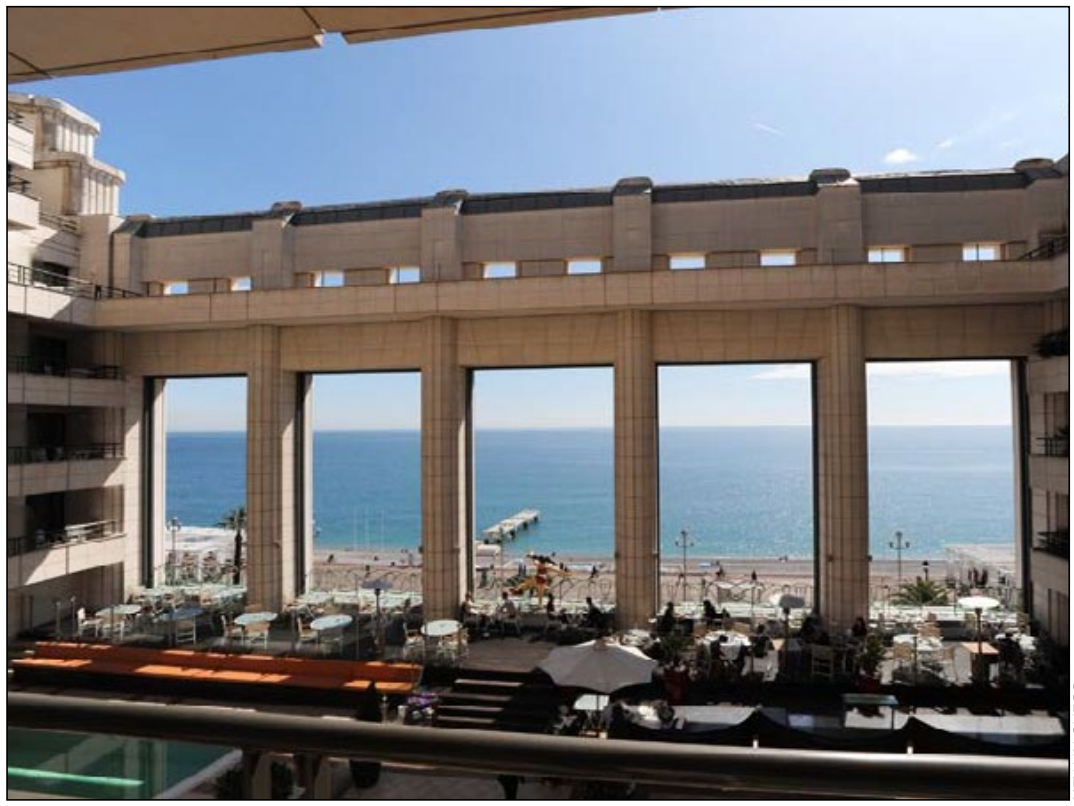
During the game I hesitated about whether I should keep the h-pawns on the board and play 26.♗d6!?, which Sasha actually thought was a better try, but I am not completely sure. Of course, with the h-pawns on the board Black can never get a counterattack along the h-file, but I was not happy with the fact that Black can play 26...gxh4, at some point followed by ...h3. White has a very pleasant position, of course, but it is not so easy to find anything constructive for White. The computer believes the position is equal, but I believe White is better. Therefore I decided to exchange the h-pawns, but this gives Black a certain amount of play along the h-file.

26...hxg5 27.♗d6

White's idea is clear: to push the central pawns, starting with c5, and at some stage question the knight on a4, which is quite shaky.



27...f5



NEW IN CHESS

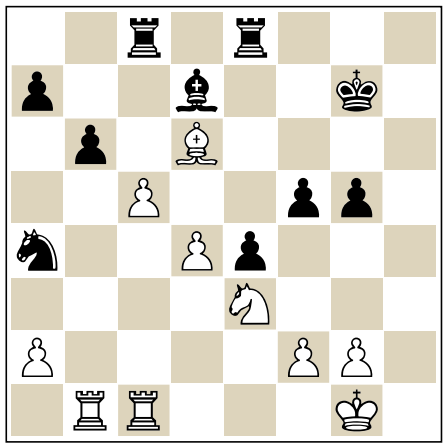
For the third time the Amber participants stayed and played in the Palais de la Méditerranée, which indeed offers a great view of the Mediterranean.

This Black played because after 27...♖h8 28.c5 ♖h7 29.g4! there is not much play for him, as I continue ♔g2 and he cannot penetrate on the h-file.

After the text I thought that if I put my bishop on e5, Black can never double on the h-file, but in fact things are not so easy.

28.c5

The most logical continuation.

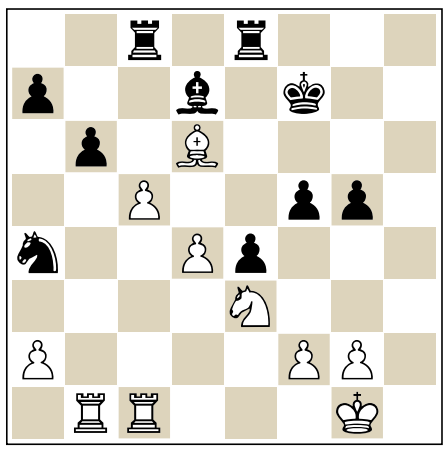


28...♔f7!

And now Sasha came up with this very strong move. To be honest, I believed that the job was almost done after 28.c5, not only because my position felt so nice, but also because he was down to something like one minute on the clock. But I forgot that with him this doesn't matter. With all other players it would lead to panic and maybe blunders, but it's well-known that Sasha doesn't care. He is playing at the same level no matter whether he has one minute left or 10. For him it doesn't matter.

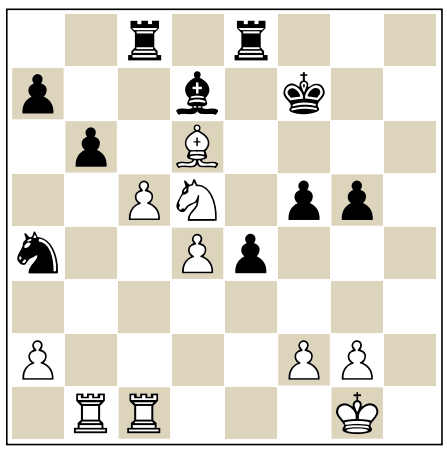
It's clear that after 28...f4 29.♘d5 Black would have been in serious trouble.

But after the text-move there is nothing terribly convincing, even though Black's position looks awful on the surface. For instance, after 29.♘c4, which I had originally intended, Black has the very cool 29...♔e6, and I don't see a way to use my 'advantage'. The computer agrees with me, saying the position is completely equal.



29.♘d5

At this point I actually should have played 29.d5!. I had seen this resource, but as Sasha was so short of time I wanted to maintain the tension and keep as many pieces on the board as possible. Still, 29.d5! would have been better, even though Black retains good drawing chances: 29...♘xc5 30.♗xc5 f4 (I was not sure I could win after 30...♖xc5 31.♖xc5 bxc5 32.♖b7 ♖d8 33.♘xf5 ♔f6 34.♘e3 ♔e5 35.♖xa7 ♔d4, and White is a pawn up, but Black has suddenly become very active. The computer disagrees with me and thinks White has good winning chances) 31.♘c4 ♖xc5 32.♘d6+ ♔e7 33.♘xe8 ♗xe8 34.♖xc5 bxc5, and now it looks as if White should be winning, but having analysed it for some time I think it is much closer to a draw than to a win for White. But even so I think that 29.d5! was a better choice.



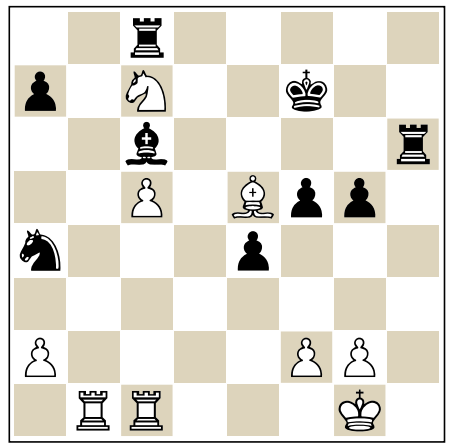
29...♖e6!

Another strong move. For a moment I was scared because I noticed that Black had a tactic: 29...bxc5 30.dxc5 ♘xc5?, and I didn't immediately see that if, after 31.♖xc5 ♖xc5 32.♗xc5, Black plays 32...♖e5 I nevertheless win easily with 33.♘f6 ♖xc5 34.♘xd7 ♖c2 35.a4.

30.♘c7 ♖h6 31.♗e5 bxc5

It was also interesting to play 31...f4, and after 32.♖c4 and, for some reason 32...♖d8, the computer thinks the position is about equal. But what he played was more natural, especially as he was down to incremental seconds.

32.dxc5 ♗c6



White's position looks very nice indeed, with Black's isolated knight on a4 and everything, but I still failed to find a concrete way to a white advantage.

33.♖c4

I could also have played the safe 33.♘b5, but then Black easily draws with 33...♗xb5 34.♖xb5 ♖hc6 35.♗d4 ♘b6!.

33...♖d8

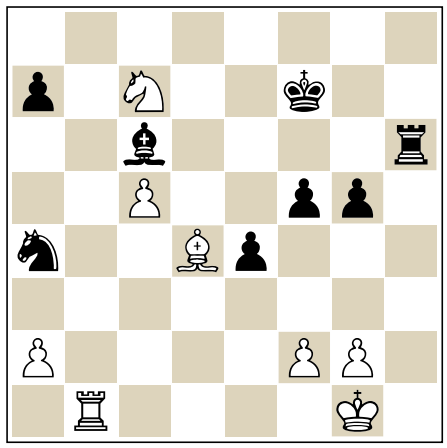
The best move.

34.♖d4 ♖xd4

This doesn't look like a mistake, but in fact he should have played 34...♖d7 35.♖xd7+ (he was afraid of 35.♖d6, and I also thought it looked entertaining, but it yields White nothing after 35...♖hxd6 36.cxd6 ♘c5, and it's just a draw) 35...♗xd7 36.♗d4 ♘xc5 37.♗xc5 ♖c6 38.♗e3 ♖xc7 39.♗xg5 ♔e6, with a draw.

35.♗xd4

Objectively speaking it's still a draw, but practically speaking Black is in some trouble.



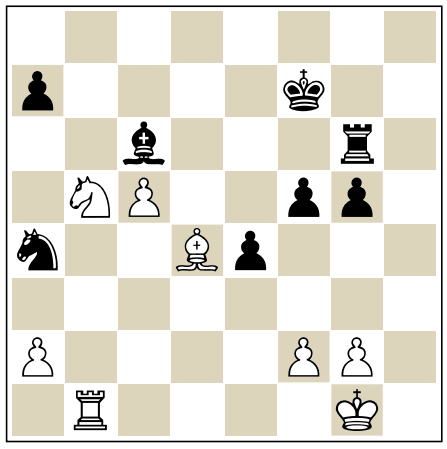
35...♖g6

Down to seconds he panicked.

He should have gone for active counterplay with 35...f4 36.♖b8 f3, with the plan to play ...e3, trying to mate me, and although all black pieces seem to be in total disharmony, there is no obvious way for White to prove an advantage. 35...♗d7 36.♖b7 ♖c6 37.♘b5 ♔e6.

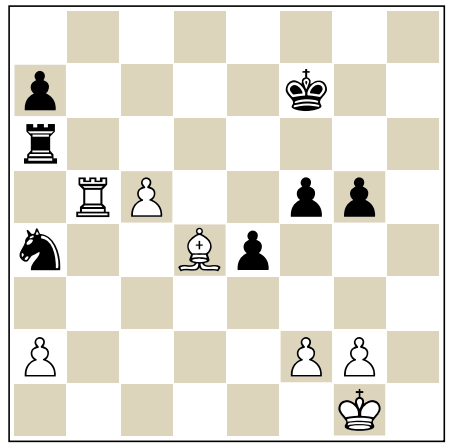
36.♘b5!

Black's plan after 36.♖b8 was to play 36...♖g8, when White can win a pawn with 37.♖xg8 ♔xg8 38.♘e6 ♗d5 39.♘xg5, but because of the opposite-coloured bishops it is not clear if White can win. Therefore I wanted to keep the rooks on the board.



36...♗xb5 This seems to me to be the final mistake. But it was already pretty inhuman to find the move 36...♔e6, a move that will not easily cross your mind, when after 37.♘xa7 the black king bravely marches ahead: 37...♔d5 38.♖d1 ♔c4, and although White keeps good winning chances, things are not so simple.

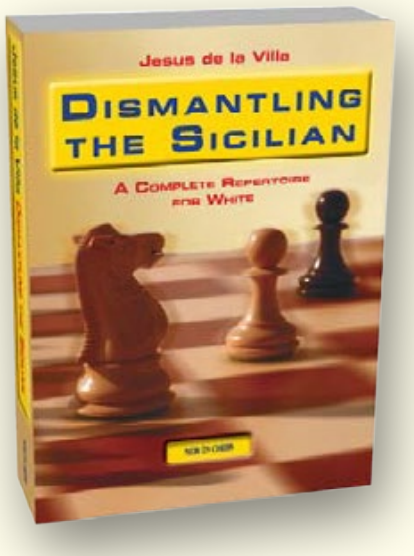
37.♖xb5 ♖a6 He had to stop my rook from coming to a5 and winning the knight, but:



38.c6! This wins a pawn.**38...♖xc6** The problem is that after 38...♔g6 White wins with the elegant 39.♖a5, when after 39...♖xa5 40.c7 the pawn cannot be stopped.

39.♖xf5+ ♔g6 40.♖a5

It still looks pretty equal, but Black is about to lose a pawn, and, as we know, in an open posi-



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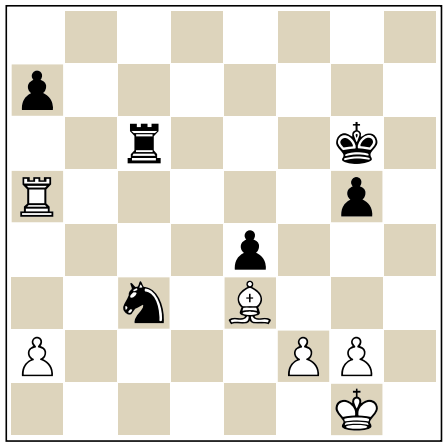
tion a bishop is far stronger than a knight.

40...♘c3 41.♗e3



Now the rest is pretty simple.

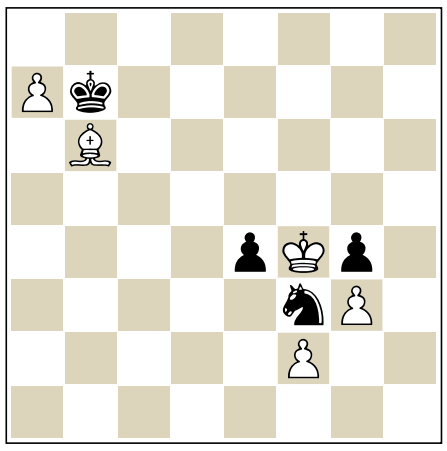
41...♘e2+

Maybe the last chance to stay in the game was 41...g4, although I don't think it would save Black.

42.♔f1 ♘f4 43.g3 ♘e6 44.♖xa7

Now it's hopeless. Black's pawns are weak and my a-pawn starts rolling.

44...g4 45.a4 ♘c7 46.♖a5 ♖c4 47.♖c5 ♖xc5 48.♗xc5 ♔f5 49.a5 ♔e5 50.♔e2 ♔d5 51.♗b6 ♘e6 52.a6 ♔c6 53.a7 ♔b7 54.♔e3 ♘g5 55.♔f4 ♘f3



56.♔xg4

Of course, no one in his right mind would take the pawn on e4, yet it's interesting for the reader to point out that in that case, hard to believe as it is, Black draws: 56.♔xe4 ♔a8 57.♔f5 ♘h2 – White is two pawns up and the black knight looks stuck in the corner, but this is a positional draw; there is no way White can win: 58.f4 gxf3 59.♗g1 ♔b7 60.♔f4 ♔a8 61.♔g5 ♘f1 62.g4 f2 63.♗xf2 ♘h2 64.♔f4 ♘xg4 65.♔xg4 ♔b7. So it was not yet too late to spoil the game, but this time I avoided this and took the g-pawn, which was much more tasty.

Black resigned.

In the second round Carlsen bounced back with a 2-0 win against the defending champion Aronian, while Ivanchuk drew both games against Svidler. In the blindfold game, Carlsen made good use of the attacking potential of the King's Indian.

NOTES BY

Magnus Carlsen

KI 1.4 – E99

Levon Aronian

Magnus Carlsen

Nice blindfold 2010 (2)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4

With this move order my opponent was probably trying to restrict my options by avoiding the Grünfeld. However, on this particular day, after having lost 0-2 on the first day, I was really spoiling for a fight, wanting to strike back immediately, and so the KID (which I usually don't play, but tried out a few times in Nice) suited me just fine. So actually, by tricking me out of the Grünfeld, he ended up slightly restricting his own options rather than mine.

4...d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1

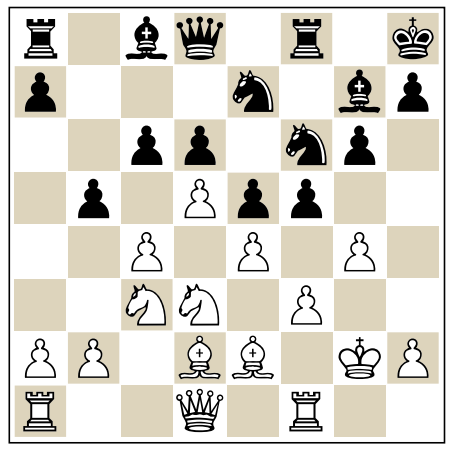
More or less expected, as Aronian had won a good game with this line against Nakamura in January.

9...♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.♗d2 ♘f6 12.f3 ♔h8

Less principled, and perhaps even less gutsy than the main line, here, is 12...f4, which was what Nakamura played. However, the text has the important advantage of being more flexible, and is actually quite a clever waiting move in several lines.

13.g4 After this I was out of book – I can after all not really claim to be that much of an expert on the KID. To be fair though, g4 is a very typical move in this kind of position, and for my next few moves I was guided by a game Eljanov-Radjabov, Elista 2008, a game that, although not quite being identical to mine, had taken a similar course.

13...c6 14.♔g2 b5



15.b3

Here 15.♘b4 was another option, also mentioned by Radjabov in his annotations to his own game, the only (but perhaps quite significant) difference being that Eljanov had the pawn on h4 and the bishop on c1.

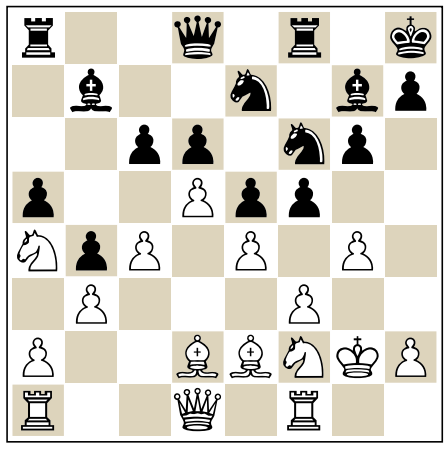
A) 15...♗b7 16.dxc6 ♘xc6 17.♘xc6 ♗xc6 18.cxb5 ♗b7 was mentioned by Radjabov, but is probably less promising here than with the pawn on h4, although Black still has counterplay;

B) During the game I thought 15...c5 was interesting, but White is better after 16.♘c6 ♘xc6 17.dxc6 b4 18.♘d5 ♕e8 19.♘xf6! (19.♘c7 ♕xc6 20.♘xa8 fxg4 is very good for Black) 19...♖xf6 (19...♗xf6 20.♗h6) 20.♗g5 ♕xc6 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♕d5;

C) 15...cxd5! 16.cxd5 ♕b6, and since the pawn is not hanging due to the pressure on e4, amongst other things, Black will follow up with ...a5 and have an excellent game.

15...a5 16.♘f2 b4 17.♘a4 ♗b7

I was still playing quickly here and felt very comfortable with my position, as the idea of sacrificing a knight on d5 is looking very attractive, while closing the position with ...c5 and ...f4 is always a viable option.

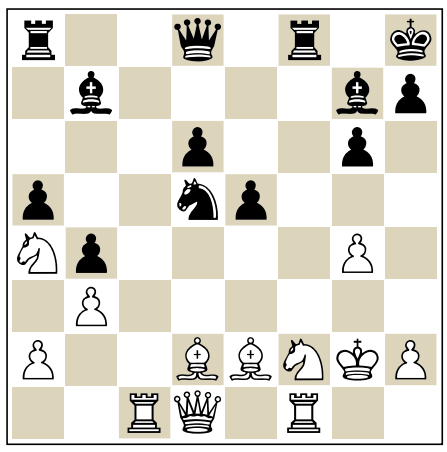


18.♖c1?

This is simply too careless. Aronian had missed my key idea.

18.♗d3 was a much better option, since if I continue as in the game, the bishop will defend from e4. Still, Black obviously has no problems here.

18...fxe4! 19.fxe4 cxd5 20.exd5 ♘exd5 21.cxd5 ♘xd5



Now it's clear that Black has a strong attack, as all my pieces will soon be pointing towards his king, and with White's scattered pieces, finding a proper defence is very hard.

22.♔g1 e4!

This move is what Aronian had missed. Once the bishop joins the attack via e5 or d4, White's days will be numbered.

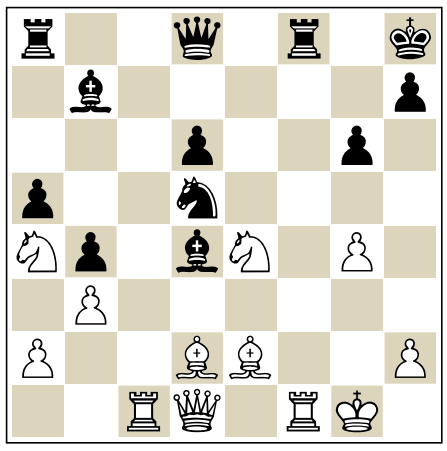
23.♘xe4

NEW IN CHESS

Blindfold game followed by blindfold post-mortem. Magnus Carlsen and Levon Aronian 'look' at some crucial games of their wildly entertaining KID clash.

Not really a move he wanted to make, but there was no other defence against the ...e4-e3 push.

23...♗d4+



24.♖f2

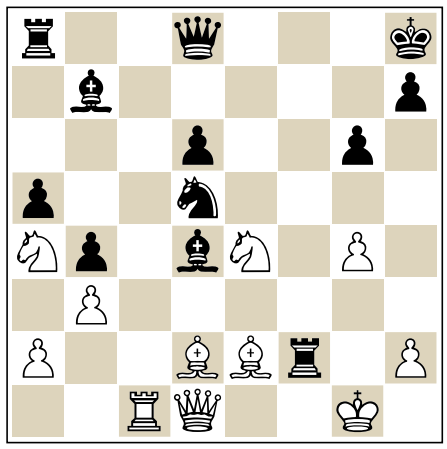
24.♔g2 looks very dangerous, but might have been White's best chance, together with ♗g5 on the next move:

A) 24...♕h4 was what I had actually intended, and it does indeed work very well after the obvious 25.♗g5 (25.♗f3 is the only move that allows White to defend) 25...♘e3+ 26.♗xe3 ♗xe4+ 27.♗f3 ♕xg4+;

B) 24...♕e7! 25.♗f3 ♖xf3 26.♕xf3 ♘f6 27.♖ce1 ♗xe4 28.♖xe4 ♘xe4, and Black is a clear pawn up, but there is still plenty of fight ahead.

24...♖xf2

When I played this, I believed that I was winning on the spot, but then I immediately noticed his only defence. However, 24...♖xf2 was the best move anyway, so it didn't really matter too much.

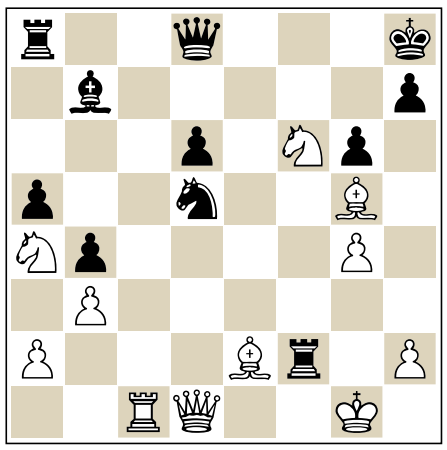


25.♘xf2??

This move, which my opponent made instantly, loses trivially. Had he taken a bit more time, he would surely have noticed the resource 25.♗g5! which, surprisingly enough, keeps White in the game. I had intended to play the simple 25...♗e3. Now, after the more or less forced line 26.♗xe3 ♖g2+

27.♔h1 ♘xe3 28.♕d4+ ♔g8 29.♕xe3 ♖xe2 30.♕xe2 ♕e7, Black will once again emerge with an extra pawn, but not without some drawing chances for his opponent.

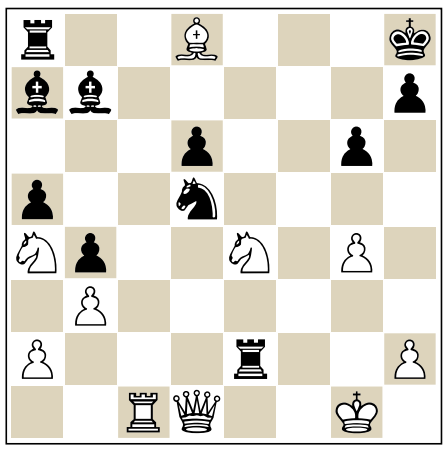
25...♗f6 (instead of 25...♗e3) is probably best, but lines like 26.♘xf6 (26.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 27.♕d4 ♘f4 28.♗f1 ♗xe4 29.g5 ♘e6 30.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 31.gxf6 ♖f8 clearly favours Black)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26...♘e3!! 27.♕d4 ♖g2+ 28.♔h1 ♖xe2+ 29.♘e4+ ♔g8 30.♗xd8 ♖c8!! 31.♕xe3 (31.♗c7 ♖e8 and e4 collapses) 31...♖xe3 32.♖xc8 ♖xe4 33.♗xa5+ ♗xc8 are not that easy to calculate blindfolded ☺.

25...♗a7? 26.♗xd8 ♖xe2+ and now



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

27.♗b6! is one key defensive idea (27.♔f1 ♖xe4 is completely winning for Black), turning the tables completely after 27...♖xe4 28.♗xa7 ♖xa7 29.♖c4!.

25...♕h4 Here, however, he sank into deep thought. But White is completely lost by now.

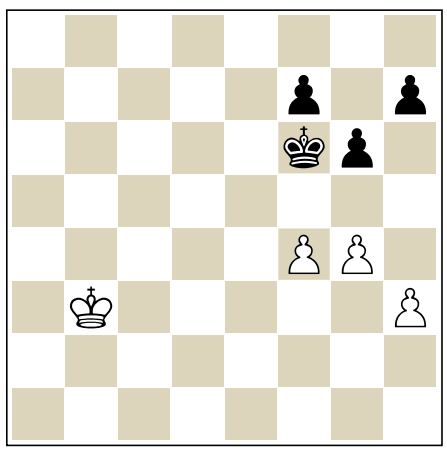
26.♕e1

26.♕f1 ♖f8 27.♗e1 ♘f4 is a pretty depressive picture for White. Rybka already says mate in 9 here! 26.♗e1 ♗e5 is what he had missed. Mate is inevitable.

26...♖f8 27.♗f3 ♖xf3 28.♕e4 ♕xf2+

White resigned. A nice way to strike back, especially as I only spent about 10 minutes on the game, which was the start of a seven-game winning streak.

There was an interesting pawn ending in one game.



Smeets-Karjakin
Nice blindfold 2010 (2)
position after 46.f4

Clearly, Black to play must create a hole on the kingside to advance his king before White moves his own king back from the queenside. The question is: which pawn to push, the g-pawn or the h-pawn?

46...g5?

The wrong choice. Black could have won by 46...h5! 47.♔c4 hxg4 48.hxg4 g5 49.f5 ♔e5. The difference between this and the game is that Black's king only has to travel to g4 to reach the base of White's pawn-chain, rather than to h3. The extra tempo makes a huge difference.

47.f5 ♔e5 48.♔c4 ♔f4

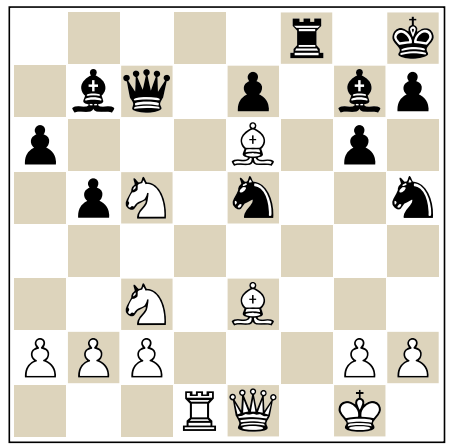
48...h5 49.gxh5 ♔xf5 50.♔d5 draws easily, so Black has no choice.

49.♔d5 ♔g3 50.f6 ♔xh3 51.♔d6 ♔xg4 52.♔e7 h5 53.♔xf7 h4 54.♔g6 h3 55.f7 h2 56.f8♕ h1♕

Black can't even play ♕+♙ vs ♕, as he loses his pawn straight away.

57.♕f5+ Draw.

Carlsen's fight back continued in Round 3 with another 2-0 whitewash, this time against Svidler. The finish of the blindfold game was entertaining.



Svidler-Carlsen
Nice blindfold 2010 (3)
positon after 22.♕e1

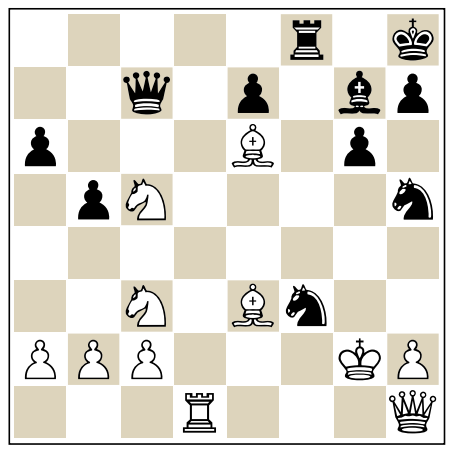
In this complex position arising from a Sicilian Dragon, Black's queen and bishop are aimed menacingly at White's kingside. Magnus Carlsen struck with an immediate sacrifice.

22...♗xg2!

In the analysis room, this was regarded as a killer blow, but Black's follow-up needs to be more precise than most of the watching grandmasters anticipated.

23.♔xg2 ♘f3 24.♕h1

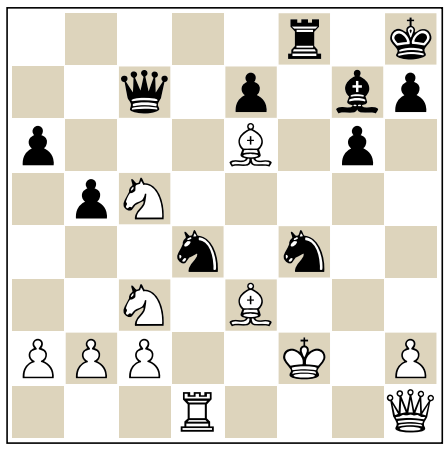
This looks dreadful, but it's White's only chance.



24...♘f4+?

A slip endangering the win. Black could have forced the attack home with the beautiful continuation 24...♘h4+! 25.♔g1 (25.♔h3 ♖f3+ 26.♔xh4 ♗f6+ 27.♗g5 ♕f4+ leads to mate) 25...♕e5 26.♘3e4 ♘f4! (setting up multiple threats, including 27...♘e2 mate and 27...♕xe6 followed by mate on h3) 27.♗g4 (27.♗xf4 ♕xf4 is hopeless) 27...♕h5!! (a deadly blow, as the bishop is overloaded by the need to guard e2 and h3; tough to see in blindfold, though) and White collapses.

25.♔f2 ♘d4



This looks like the end of the road for White, and nobody watching was surprised when *Svidler resigned* here. However, as Fritz points out in a flash, White could have played 26.♘d7! and the various discovered and double checks are surprisingly ineffective. At first it seemed that this move would draw, but in fact 26...♘h3+ 27.♔g2 (27.♔e1 ♘xc2+ 28.♔d2 ♘f2 29.♘xf8 ♘xh1 30.♔xc2 ♗xf8 31.♔b3 h6 looks a little dangerous for White) 27...♕c6+ 28.♗d5 ♕xd7 29.♖xd4 e6 30.♔xh3 ♗xd4 31.♗c6 ♕a7 32.♗xd4+ ♕xd4 33.♕e4 ♕d6 still gives Black a large advantage thanks to White's exposed king.

Admittedly, 26.♘d7! isn't an easy move to spot, but still it's unusual for a world-class grandmaster to resign unnecessarily.

Ivanchuk's progress was less spectacular, but nonetheless effective, and his 1½-½ win against Karjakin left him in sole lead.

In Round 4, Carlsen caught up with Ivanchuk by scoring his third 2-0 win in a row, this time against Smeets, who was finding it tough going in the top league. By contrast, Ivanchuk could 'only' beat Aronian by 1½-½. Kramnik was another former winner who suffered a reverse in Round 4, since he lost 2-0 to Gelfand. Ivanchuk opened up a half-point gap in Round 5 by beating Smeets 1½-½ on his 41st birthday, while Carlsen's spectacular run was broken by Karjakin, who won convincingly in the rapid game. Gelfand again scored 2-0, this time against Dominguez, and was now level with Carlsen. Round 6 saw a crucial clash between two of the leading players, Carlsen and Gelfand. Carlsen scored another 2-0 victory and leapfrogged Ivanchuk, who was held to two draws by Ponomariov. Amazingly, after 12 games Carlsen had yet to draw a game.

In this round Grischuk won a nice game against Svidler in the blindfold, although afterwards he didn't seem to regard it as anything special.

SL 9.5 – D47
Peter Svidler
Alexander Grischuk
Nice blindfold (6)

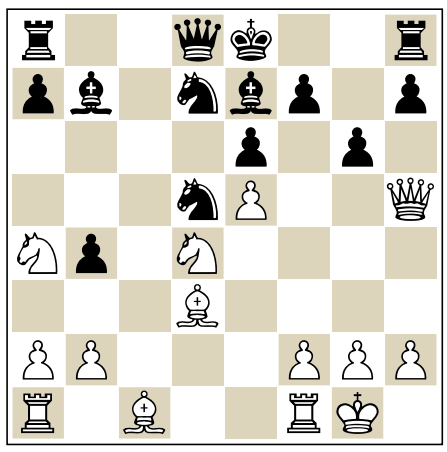
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 b5 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.e4 b4 10.♘a4 c5 11.e5 ♘d5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♗e7

An alternative to the more popular 13...♘xe5.

14.♕h5!?

An unusual but interesting response. 14.♖e1 is by far the most common move after which the main line runs 14...0-0 15.♕g4 ♖e8 16.♗b5 with a slight advantage for White; for example, 16...♔h8 17.♗d2 a6 18.♗c6 ♕c7 19.♖ac1 ♘xe5 20.♗xb7 ♘xg4 21.♖xc7 ♘xc7 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 23.♘c6 ♘d5 24.♘xe7 ♘xe7 25.♗xb4 and White was still slightly better in the endgame, Grischuk-Shirov, Bilbao 2009.

14...g6



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NEW IN CHESS

Watched by Karjakin (barely visible), Grischuk, Svidler, Aronian, Aronian's father, Ljubojevic, Smeets (eyes averted) and Gashimov's father, Vladimir Kramnik and Vugar Gashimov go over their rapid game in the hospitality room.

15.♕e2?

This definitely looks wrong. The only continuation consistent with White's previous move is 15.♕h6! to prevent immediate castling. Then:

A) 15...♗f8? 16.♕h3? led to a quick draw in Rychagov-Shinkevich, Kaluga 2003, but White should prefer 16.♘xe6! ♗xh6 17.♘xd8 ♔xd8 18.♗xh6 ♘xe5 19.♗e4 with a decisive advantage;

B) 15...♕a5?! 16.b3 ♘c7 17.♗b2 ♘xe5 was played in Hebden-Lukacs, London 1988, and now the simple 18.♗e2! would have given White strong pressure for the pawn;

C) 15...♘xe5 may be best, but even here 16.♗b5+ ♘d7 17.♘c6 ♕c7 18.♘xe7 ♘xe7 19.♖d1 ♗c6 20.♗xc6 ♕xc6 21.b3 ♘f5 22.♕d2 offers White fair chances of an advantage due to the weakened dark squares on Black's kingside.

It's surprising this line isn't played more often by White, as it seems to pose some problems for Black.

15...0-0

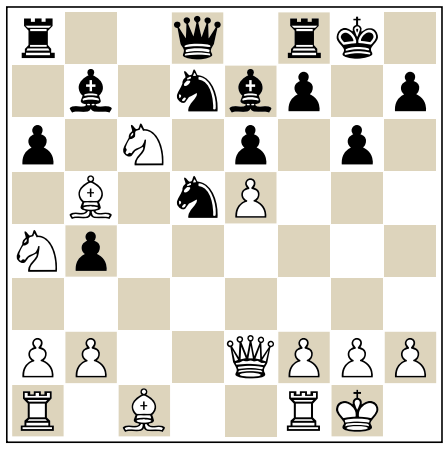
Now Black has solved his only real problem, that of castling safely, and White is left with an offside knight on a4 and a sickly pawn on e5.

16.♗b5 a6

Objectively the simple 16...♕c7, putting more pressure on e5, was slightly preferable, but Grischuk prefers a more complicated course which sets a nasty trap.

17.♘c6?

Svidler falls into the trap and allows Black a surprising forced win. 17.♗c6 was better, with a roughly level position.



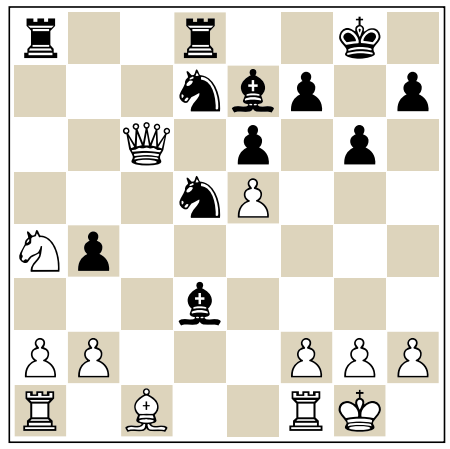
17...axb5!

Although this combination is not especially deep, it depends on one very surprising move which the watching grandmasters failed to spot in advance. It was quite an achievement for Grischuk to find this combination in a blindfold game.

18.♘xd8 ♖fxd8

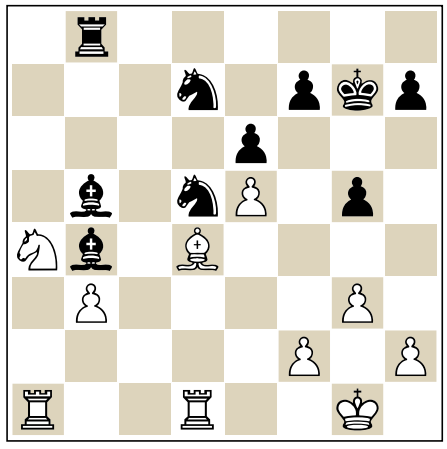
The a4 knight is trapped and if it is lost Black will have three minor pieces and a strong initiative for the queen, which amounts to a decisive advantage. Therefore White has to take the b5 pawn, but the result is that his queen is forced into a dead end.

19.♕xb5 ♗a6 20.♕c6 ♗d3!



This is the star move, which takes away the c2-square from the queen and introduces various threats: 21...♘xe5 and 21...♖ac8 22.♕b7 ♖c7 trap the queen, while 21...♖a6 wins the knight. White

cannot meet all the threats.
21.♖e1 ♖ac8 22.♕b7 ♖c7 23.♕xc7 ♘xc7
Black has bishop and knight for rook and pawn, nominally a roughly level trade. However, the knight on a4 remains stuck and all Black's pieces are active, which represents a winning positional advantage. White struggles on hopelessly for several moves.
24.a3 ♖a8 25.axb4 ♗xb4 26.♖d1 ♗b5 27.b3 ♘d5 27...♘c5 is even more brutal. **28.♗b2 ♖b8 29.♗d4 ♔g7 30.g3 g5**

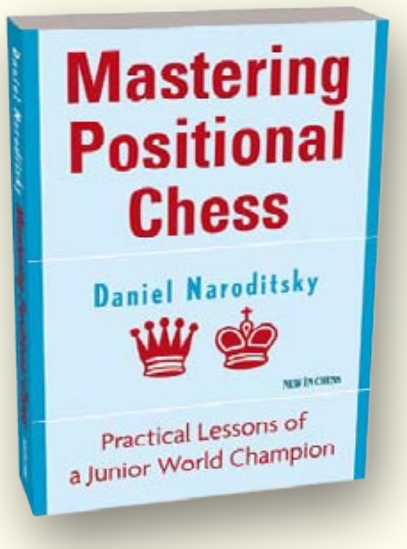


31.♖ac1? ♗**e2** White resigned.

The lead changed hands again in Round 7, when Ivanchuk beat Grischuk 1½-½, while Carlsen surprisingly lost 1½-½ against Gashimov. The main culprit here was Carlsen's Berlin Wall, which was vigorously demolished by the 23-year-old Azerbaijan player. Since his first-round loss to Ivanchuk, Carlsen had won all his blindfold games, but this loss allowed Grischuk to draw level with him in the blindfold competition.

In Round 8, Ivanchuk was held to two draws by bottom-marker Dominguez, so Carlsen had a chance to close the gap by winning his match, although this was never going to be easy against a determined Kramnik. In the event, Carlsen lost the blindfold game after adopting a dubious opening gambit, while he should also have lost in the rapid when his King's Indian crumbled into dust and left him three pawns down. However, at this point, Carlsen's determination kicked in and his long and apparently futile resistance was rewarded when Kramnik slipped up in the endgame and allowed a draw.

With three double rounds to go, the leading scores were Ivanchuk 11, Carlsen 10, Kramnik and Gelfand 9½.
In the blindfold, Grischuk was now a point ahead of the field, while in the rapid Ivanchuk held a one point lead over Carlsen, Kramnik and Gelfand.
In Round 9, Ivanchuk drew twice with Gashimov, which allowed both Carlsen and Kramnik to close the gap by half a point by winning 1½-½ against Dominguez and Svidler respectively. In the rapid, Smeets was impaled on the spines of Grischuk's Hedgehog.



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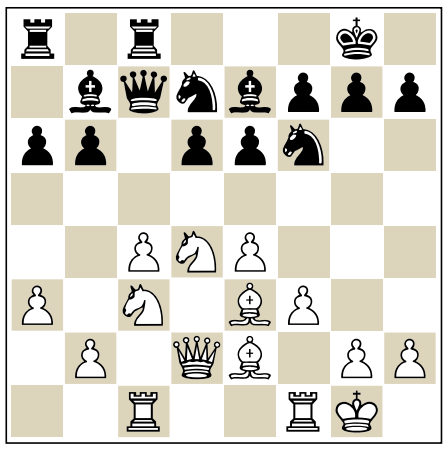
NOTES BY

Alexander Grischuk

SI 41.16 – B41
Jan Smeets
Alexander Grischuk
Nice rapid 2010 (9)

It is a rare case when one has a clear plan for the whole game. That's why I decided to comment this game, as my plan was very clear, primitive and straightforward: play the Hedgehog, wait for the time-trouble phase, push ...d6-d5, get lucky and win. And this is exactly what happened!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♕c7 7.a3 b6 8.♗e2 ♗b7 9.f3 ♗e7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.0-0 d6 12.♕d2 ♘bd7 13.♖ac1 ♖fc8!



An uncommon set-up, which in my view is much more promising than the usual one with ...♖ac8, ...♖fe8 and ...♕b8, since after White breaks through on the queenside, the queen on b8 becomes a target for the white pieces, the rooks in particular. Now, though, White can attack the rook on b8 with his rooks as much as he likes.

I am not sure who invented this plan, since there are so many possible move orders and transpositions, but I got the idea from Andrey Schekachev.

14.♖fd1 ♖ab8 15.b4 ♗a8 16.♗f1 ♕d8 17.♘a4 ♘e5 18.♕f2 ♕e8 19.b5

Obviously, it was possible to play in a 'normal' way with 19.♘b2.

19...♗d8 20.♘b2

Thanks to the tactics Black holds his position after 20.♘b3 ♘xc4 21.♗xc4 axb5.

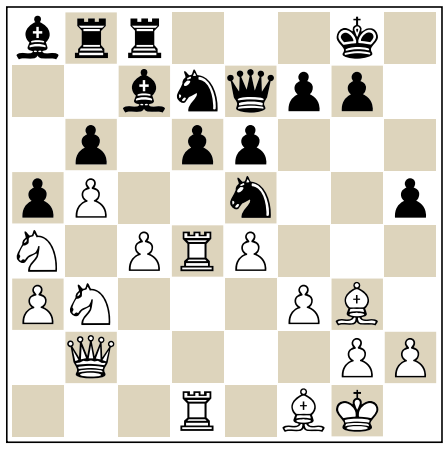
20...a5 21.♘b3 ♕e7 22.♘a4 ♘fd7 23.♕b2 ♗c7

Generally speaking, the fact that b4-b5 and ...a6-a5 have been played should be in Black's favour, but the position is still about equal.

24.♗f2 h6 25.♖d4 ♕g5 26.♗g3 ♕e7

Not the smartest manoeuvre ever, but it doesn't spoil anything, and it managed to confuse my opponent.

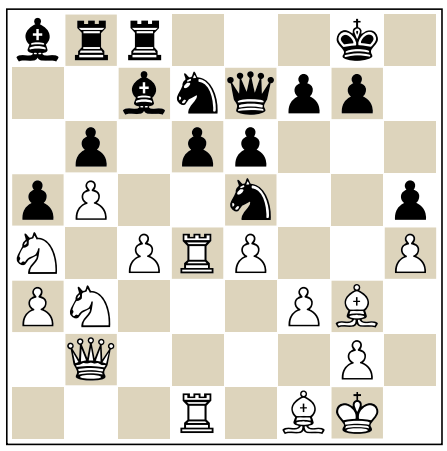
27.♖cd1 h5



28.h4?

After 28.♕f2 White will have to calculate 28...d5, with the follow-up ...♕xa3, on every move.

Probably best was 28.♗f2, and after 28...h4 29.h3 ♘c5 30.♘c3 there is still nothing special for Black.

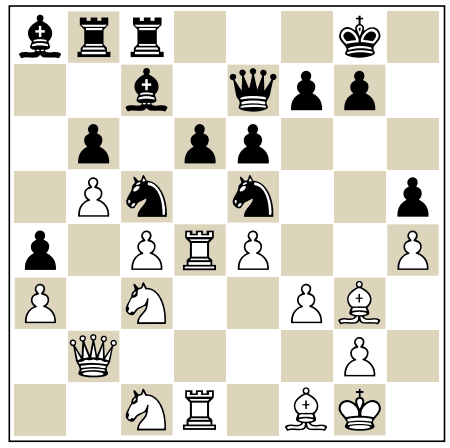


28...♘c5! 29.♘c3

The point is that after 29.♘bxc5 dxc5 the bishop on g3 is hanging.

29...a4! 30.♘c1

Better was 30.♘d2 ♕f6 31.♗f2.



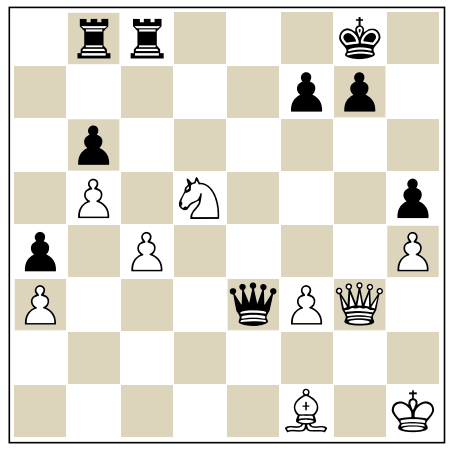
30...d5!

The plan has been executed. There is even no real need to get lucky, since Black is already close to winning.

31.exd5

The last chance was 31.f4, but after 31...♘xc4 32.♗xc4 dxc4 33.♖xc4 ♖d8 White's position is awful.

31...♘xf3+ 32.gxf3 ♗xg3 33.♕g2 ♗e5 34.♘1e2 ♗xd4+ 35.♖xd4 exd5 36.♘xd5 ♗xd5 37.♖xd5 ♘e6 38.♘c3 ♘f4 39.♕g3 ♕e3+ 40.♔h1 ♘xd5 41.♘xd5



41...♕h6

Not a blunder, as some might think. In mutual time-trouble an active knight is well worth a passive rook. Especially when you are two exchanges up!

42.♘e7+ ♔h8 43.♘xc8 ♖xc8 44.♕e5 ♔g8 45.c5 ♕c1

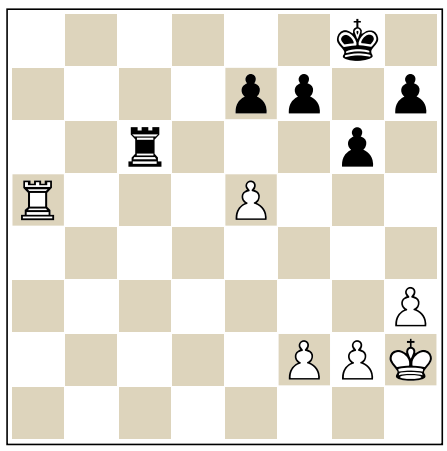
White resigned.

In the penultimate round, there was a big clash between Kramnik and Ivanchuk, which resulted in two draws after a hard-fought battle. Carlsen took full advantage of

NEW IN CHESS

Ruslan Ponomariov wasn't too happy with his Amber debut. Fortunately his girlfriend Ines arrived in time to cheer him up at the closing dinner.

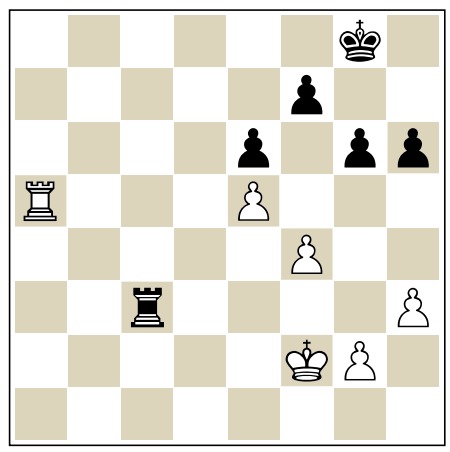
this to take the sole lead by beating Ponomariov 2-0. The blindfold game was an efficient positional victory by Carlsen, but something incredible happened in the rapid game.



Ponomariov-Carlsen
Nice rapid 2010 (10)
position after 39.♖xa5

The finish of this game is truly remarkable. Agreeing to a draw would seem to be automatic in such a position played between two leading grandmasters, but Magnus Carlsen evidently didn't think so; he played for a win and eventually reached his target (it may have helped that he had had – and won – exactly the same ending in the game against Eirik Gulaksen in Tromsø in 2006 – ed.). It seems almost inconceivable that a grandmaster such as Ponomariov, rated 2737 and a former FIDE world champion, could possibly lose this ending but that's exactly what happened. Of course, Carlsen is rated higher, but a difference of 75 points is not especially great and one would imagine that Ponomariov would be capable of reaching a draw from this position against any opponent, even at 10 seconds per move.

39...♖c4 40.♔g3 e6 41.f4 h6 42.♔f3 ♖c3+ 43.♔f2



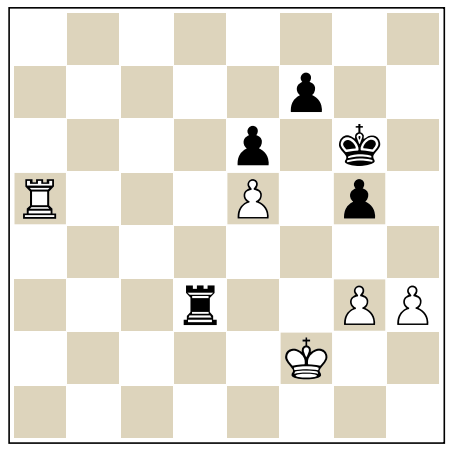
The best way to hold a drawn position is to not take the first step down the slippery slope to defeat. If a couple of mistakes are made, the position might well still be drawn, but the task is made more difficult not only because of the deteriorating position but also because the defender is disturbed by the knowledge that he has already gone wrong.

Here Black's only real plan is to play ...g5 at some stage, exchanging this pawn for White's f-pawn and thus leaving the e5 pawn isolated and potentially weak. It follows that the simplest draw is by 43.♔g4, keeping the king active and preventing the execution of the ...g5 plan. There's no real danger of White being mated and after, for example, 43...♔g7 44.g3 h5+ 45.♔h4 ♔h6 46.♖a4 Black cannot make progress.

43...g5 44.fxg5 hxg5

Black has achieved a modest success in separating the e-pawn from the rest of White's pawns. White is also handicapped by his inability to play g4, which would keep Black's king out. However, nothing too serious has happened yet.

45.♖a4 ♔g7 46.♖g4 ♔h6 47.g3 ♔h5 48.♖a4 ♔g6 49.♖a5 ♖d3



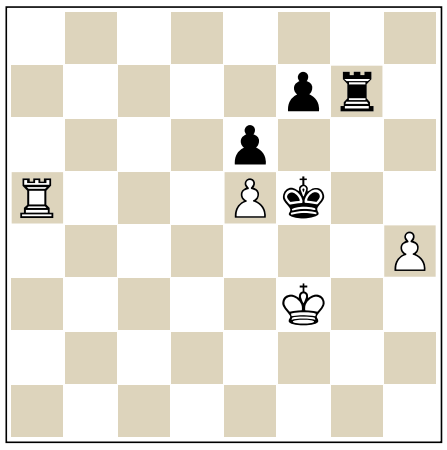
50.h4?!

White decides to exchange another pair of pawns, but it leaves White with e- and h-pawns, both of which are weak. It would have been simpler to just wait by 50. ♖b5. If Black's rook leaves the

third rank, White can play g4, while he can always meet ...♔f5 by ♖b7.

50...gxh4 51.gxh4 ♖d7 52.♔e3 ♖b7 53.♔f4 ♖b4+ 54.♔g3 ♔f5 55.♖a7 ♖g4+ 56.♔f3 ♖g7 57.♖a5

At first sight this also looks like a reasonable defensive plan, but Carlsen manoeuvres skilfully to create problems for White.



57...♖g1! 58.♖b5

58.♖a7? is impossible due to 58...♔xe5 so White just waits.

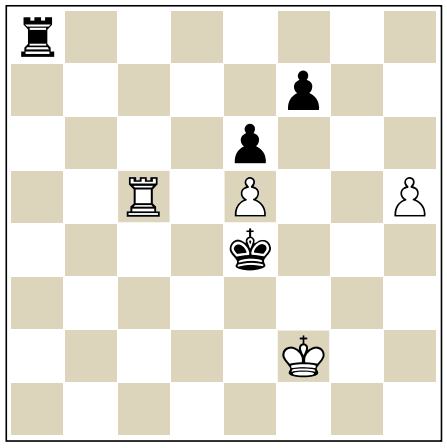
58...♖a1 59.♖c5 ♖a3+ 60.♔f2 ♔e4

Another small step forwards. Now the threat is 61...♖f3+ followed by ...♖f5, winning the e5 pawn.

61.h5

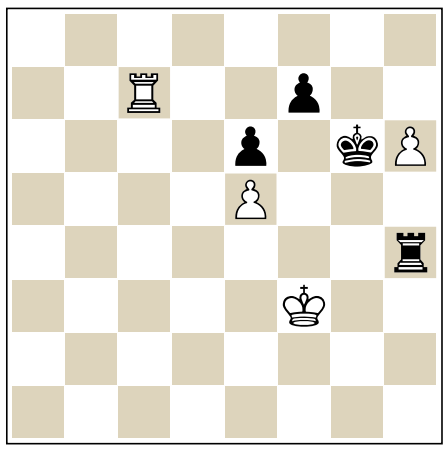
Countering the threat, because now 61...♖f3+ 62.♔e2 ♖f5 63.♖c4+ ♔xe5 64.h6 ♔f6 65.♖h4 is an immediate draw. Nor can Black grab the h-pawn by 61...♖h3 62.♖c7 ♖xh5, since 63.♖xf7 ♖f5+ 64.♖xf5 ♔xf5 65.♔f3 is a draw.

61...♖a8!



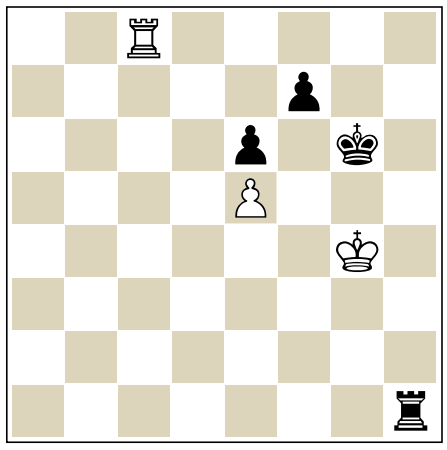
Once again Carlsen creates difficulties for White, since he now threatens 62...♖h8 63.♖c7 ♖h7, winning a pawn.

62.♔g3 ♔f5 63.♔h4 ♖a4+ 64.♔g3 ♖g4+ 65.♔f3 ♖f4+ 66.♔g3 ♔g5 67.h6 ♖g4+ 68.♔f3 ♖h4 69.♖c7 ♔g6



The h-pawn finally falls, and it is possible that after the mistaken 50.h4?! White could not have avoided this. The position remains drawn, but White is gradually approaching the precipice.

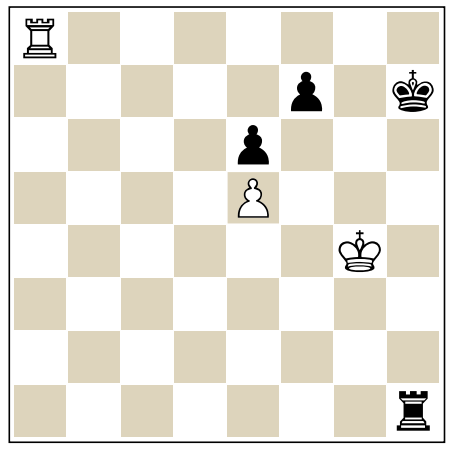
70.♖c8 ♖xh6 71.♔g4 ♖h1



72.♖g8+?

And now he tumbles over. It's surprising that this natural check is the losing move, but it allows Black's rook to occupy the f-file, thereby permanently cutting the white king off from the e5 pawn. 72.♔f4! was correct, defending the e5 pawn with the king whenever possible and leaving the rook free to roam. After 72...♖h4+ 73.♔e3 ♔f5 74.♖c7 ♖h7 75.♔d4, for example, Black is unable to make progress.

72...♔h7 73.♖a8



73...♖f1!

The decisive move after which my computer announces mate in 50. Carlsen may not be a computer but he has no trouble finishing the game off.

74.♖a2 ♔g6 75.♖g2 ♖f5 76.♖e2 ♔g7 The winning plan involves playing the king round to d5 to attack White's pawn.

77.♔g3 ♔f8 78.♖e4 ♔e7 79.♔g4 ♔d7 80.♖d4+ ♔c6 81.♖d6+ ♔c7 82.♖d1 White also loses his pawn after 82.♖a6 ♔d7 83.♖a5 ♔c6 84.♔g3 ♔b6.

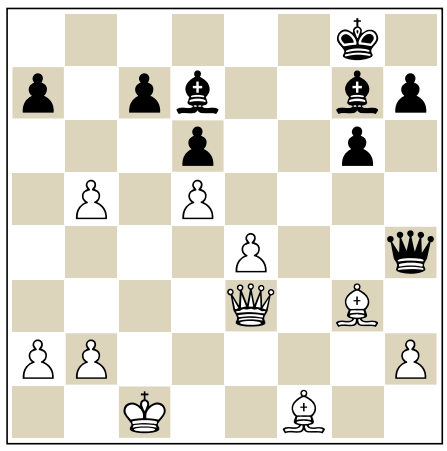
82...♖xe5 83.♖f1 f5+ 84.♔g5 ♔d6 85.♔f6 ♖e4 86.♖d1+ ♔c5 87.♖d8 f4 88.♔g5 e5 89.♔g4 ♖e3 90.♖d1 ♔c4 91.♖d2 f3 92.♔g3 e4 93.♔f2 ♖d3 94.♖a2 ♔d4 95.♖a4+ ♔e5 96.♔g3 ♖d2 97.♖a5+ ♔d4 98.♖a4+ ♔e3 99.♖a3+ ♔e2 100.♔f4 f2

White resigned.

Carlsen's victory in this game really impressed me, and not only because of his undoubted fighting spirit and endgame ability. Dominant world champions, such as Fischer and Kasparov, achieved their successes not only because of their great chess ability, but also because they established a psychological ascendancy over the other players which amplified the effects of their chess talent. This took the form of a mixture of respect, awe and, dare one say it, fear. It required a very strong-willed player to resist this influence and perform up to his full

strength when facing these opponents. It seems to me that Carlsen, although he is only 19 and is not (yet) world champion, is already establishing just such an ascendancy over many players.

The leading scores were now Carlsen 13½, Ivanchuk 13 and Kramnik 12. With two points at stake in the final round, several results were still possible. The crucial pairings in the last round were Gelfand-Ivanchuk, Kramnik-Karjakin and Grischuk-Carlsen. In the blindfold round, Ivanchuk made a solid draw while Kramnik won efficiently against Karjakin. That left Carlsen's game.



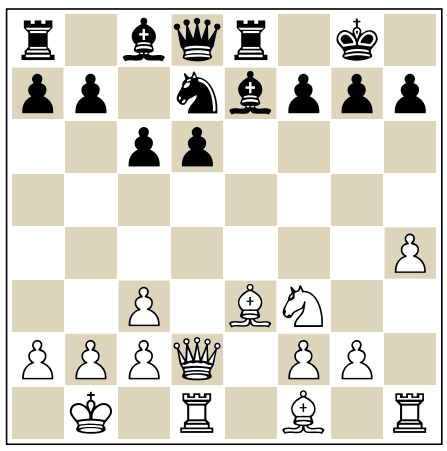
Grischuk-Carlsen
Nice blindfold 2010 (11)
position after 25.♗xf1

25...♕xe4??
When this move appeared on the screen, one of the players commented that 'at least it proves he isn't God.' After the correct continuation 25...♗xb2+ 26.♔xb2 ♕f6+ 27.♕c3 ♕xf1 28.♕xc7 ♕e2+ a draw is very likely.
26.♕xe4
1-0. Bringing Black crashing down to earth. Carlsen had forgotten that the move 18.♕d2-e3 had been played and believed that White's queen was still on d2.

That left Carlsen and Ivanchuk level again, with Kramnik half a point behind. However, Kramnik definitely had the hardest task in the final game as he was Black, while the other two were White. Indeed, Kramnik obtained a poor position from the opening, and his attempts to play for complications were convincingly refuted by Karjakin. Carlsen soon obtained a positional advantage, but by this time all eyes were on Ivanchuk's game.

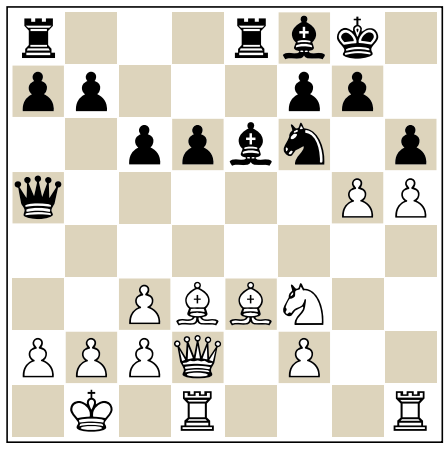
RG 3.5 – C42
Vasily Ivanchuk
Boris Gelfand
Nice rapid 2010 (11)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♖e8
9...♘e5 is the most popular move in this position. Developing the rook has been played a few times recently, but the results do not appear especially encouraging for Black.
10.h4 c6 11.♔b1
This move had already occurred in an earlier round of the Amber tournament. In another recent game, Topalov-Gelfand, Linares 2010, White continued 11.h5 h6 12.♔b1 ♘f6 (12...♕a5?! would transpose to Ivanchuk-Gelfand) 13.♗d3 ♗f8 14.♖dg1 ♘g4 15.♗f4 ♕f6 but Black had a relatively comfortable game.



11...♕a5?!
I'm doubtful about this move given that White has already played ♔b1 voluntarily. It seems more logical to play 11...♘f6 so as to release the c8 bishop.

12.h5 h6
In this line, Black almost always prevents the advance of the pawn to h6, which would create a permanent mating danger.
13.♗d3 ♗f8?!
Gelfand deviates from his earlier game against Dominguez from Round 5, which continued 13...♘e5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.♕e2 (15.♗xh6 gxh6 16.♕xh6 only leads to a draw after 16...e4 17.♗xe4 ♕g5 18.♕h7+ ♔f8 19.♕h8+ ♕g8 20.♕e5 ♕g5 21.♕h8+ with a repetition of moves) 15...♗e6 16.♗c4 ♗xc4 17.♕xc4 ♖ad8 18.♕g4 ♔f8 19.♖d7 ♖xd7 20.♕xd7 ♕d5?! 21.♕xd5 cxd5 22.♗xa7 ♖a8 23.♗e3, and White had an extra pawn in the ending, although Gelfand later won after some serious errors by White. However, Gelfand's new move doesn't inspire much confidence in Black's position, and it seems likely that Black must search for an improvement earlier.
14.g4
Ivanchuk needed to win this game and he adopts the most direct and aggressive continuation.
14...♘f6 15.g5 ♗e6



At first sight awkward for White, because he does not want to allow the exchange of queens by playing 16.c4, while 16.b3? ♘d5 is obviously bad.
16.a3!
This move looks risky due to the possibility of ...♕d5, attacking f3 and threatening mate in two, but

NEW IN CHESS

In an inspired speech Vasily Ivanchuk praised the uniqueness of the Amber Tournament and thanked Mr. and Mrs. Van Oosterom for their unparalleled generosity.

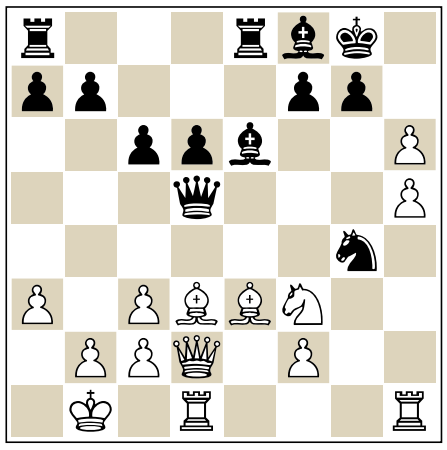
Ivanchuk has correctly judged that he need not fear this idea.

16...♘g4

The best chance, as the immediate 16...♕d5 17.c4 ♕xf3 18.gxf6 ♕xf6 19.♗d4 ♕f3 20 ♖dg1 gives White an enormous attack in return for the pawn.

17.gxh6 ♕d5

This is the point of Black's play, but Ivanchuk defuses his threats with a simple but effective stroke.



18.♕e2!

White simultaneously stops the mate and defends the attacked knight. It turns out that the penetration of Black's queen to a2 and a1 doesn't achieve very much.

18...♕a2+

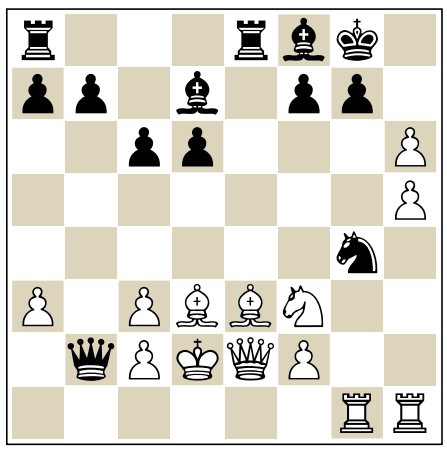
Black has nothing better than to execute his 'threat', but this leaves his kingside exposed to the full force of White's attack.

19.♔c1 ♕a1+ 20.♔d2 ♕xb2 21.♖dg1

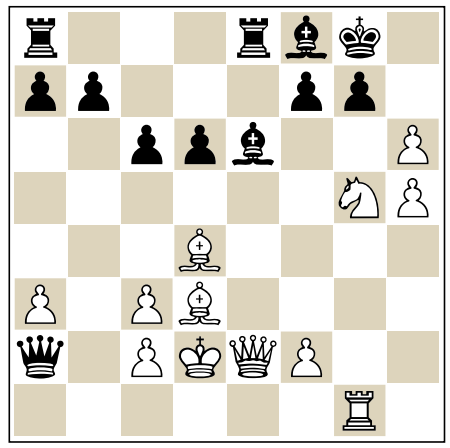
With the deadly threat of 22.♘d4 (or 22.♘h4), and the g4 knight is too exposed. At first sight 21.♖a1 intending ♖hb1 looks even better, but this would allow Black to limp on by 21...♗a2.

21...♗d7

21...c5 prevents the knight moving to d4, but then White wins by 22.♘g5! ♘xh6 23.♘xe6 ♖xe6 24.♖b1 ♕xa3 25.♖a1 followed by ♖hb1 trapping the queen.



22.♖xg4! A neat and forceful finish. **22...♗xg4 23.♘g5** Threatening mate in two by 24.h7+ ♔h8 25.♘xf7. **23...♗e6 24.♗d4** One of many winning moves. The threat is 25.♕xe6 and then mate as before. **24...♕a2 25.♖g1** Black has no chance with White's whole army in the attack.



25...c5 26.♗h7+

This leads to a forced mate.

26...♔h8 27.hxg7+ ♗xg7 28.♘xf7+ ♗xf7 29.♗xg7+ ♔xh7 30.♕d3+ ♔g8 31.♗f6+ ♔f8 32.♕xd6+

Black resigned.

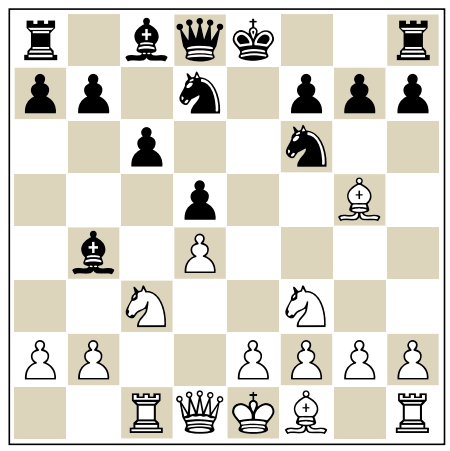
Meanwhile, Carlsen's game was still in progress.

NI 27.8 – D38
Magnus Carlsen
Alexander Grischuk
Nice rapid (11) 2010

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 7.♖c1

7.e3 is by far the most common move for White here.

7...c6



Nice 2010		Blindfold
		TPR
1 Alexander Grischuk	8	2920
2 Vasily Ivanchuk	6½	2811
3 Vladimir Kramnik	6½	2807
4 Magnus Carlsen	6½	2805
5 Boris Gelfand	6	2781
6 Vugar Gashimov	5½	2746
7 Peter Svidler	5½	2745
8 Sergey Karjakin	5½	2748
9 Levon Aronian	5	2707
10 Ruslan Ponomariov	4½	2682
11 Jan Smeets	4	2652
12 Leinier Dominguez	2½	2538

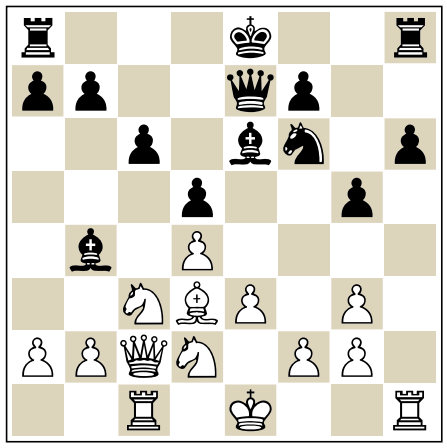
8.♕c2

This is really unusual, with 8.a3 and 8.e3 accounting for almost all the practical examples from this position. It's hard to believe that Carlsen's move should pose Black any serious problems.

8...h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♘e4 11.♘d2 ♘df6 12.e3 ♘xg3

This isn't really wrong, but after the straightforward 12...♘xd2 13.♕xd2 ♘e4 14.♕c2 h5 15.f3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♗e6 I don't see any difficulties for Black.

13.hxg3 ♕e7 14.♗d3 ♗e6



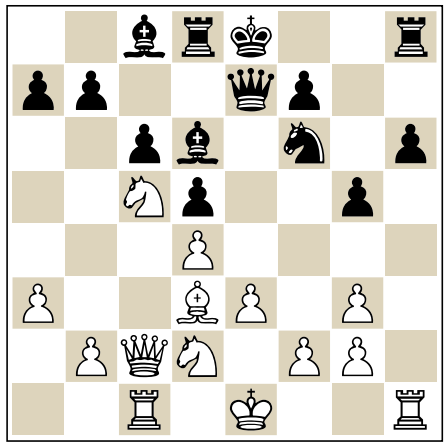
With this type of pawn-structure, Black must take care lest White be able to exploit the weakness of f5. At the moment this might seem unlikely, but Black always has to worry that a knight might eventually make its way to this outpost.

15.a3 ♗d6 16.♘a4 ♖d8?!

Perhaps Black's main difficulty is to find a place for his king. By playing ...♖d8 he definitely rules out the possibility of queenside castling, which may appear logical since White's main plan involves ♘c5, b4 and a queenside pawn advance. However, I think that 16...0-0-0! was better. After 17.♘c5 ♔b8 18.b4 ♗c8 Black's queenside position is quite solid, and he is now ready to generate counterplay on the kingside by pushing his h-pawn.

Nice 2010		Rapid
		TPR
1 Vasily Ivanchuk	8	2921
2 Magnus Carlsen	8	2915
3 Sergey Karjakin	6½	2813
4 Vladimir Kramnik	6½	2807
5 Peter Svidler	6	2781
6 Vugar Gashimov	6	2782
7 Levon Aronian	6	2779
8 Boris Gelfand	5½	2745
9 Ruslan Ponomariov	4½	2682
10 Alexander Grischuk	4½	2680
11 Leinier Dominguez	2½	2538
12 Jan Smeets	2	2492

17.♘c5 ♗c8



18.b4?

A careless move which allows Black to force White into a passive position. 18.♘f3! was correct and would have given White some advantage. Then 18...♘g4 could be met by 19.♗f5, while 18...g4 is dubious because 19.♘h4 heads for f5.

18...♘g4!

Black exploits White's lapse to threaten 19...♗xg3. In order to meet this threat, White is more or less forced to retreat his knight,

19.♘f1 h5

Much depends on whether Black can maintain his knight on g4. If he can, then White will find it hard to gain any advantage, but if the knight is driven back then

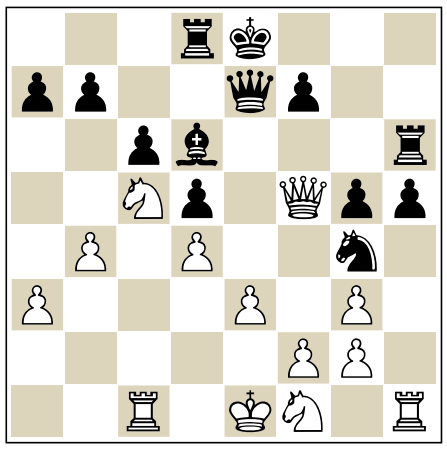
NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen demonstrated his extra class when in a must-win situation he ground down Alexander Grischuk in the final rapid game.

Black's attempts at activity will have failed and he will be left with a weakened position.

20.♗f5 ♗xf5 21.♕xf5 ♖h6

Threatening 22...♗xc5 23.bxc5 ♖f6 24.♕xg5 ♘xf2 and Black wins.



22.♖c2!?

This meets Black's threat by defending f2, but there is a second point to the move.

22...a5?

Not noticing the threat. Black should have moved his king off the dangerous e-file by 22...♔f8!, when he is at least equal.

23.f3!

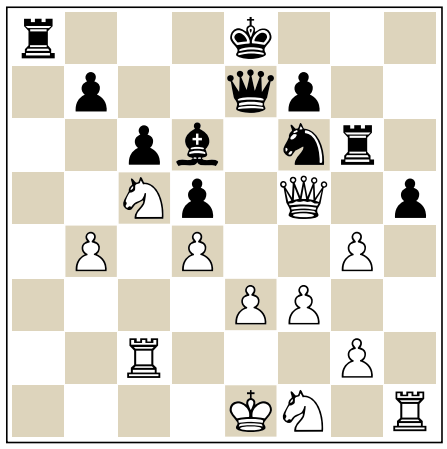
Black can no longer take twice on e3 because of the pin by ♖e2.

23...♘f6 24.♕xg5 ♖g6 25.♕f5 axb4 26.axb4 ♖a8

Black cannot regain the pawn by 26...♗xg3+ 27.♘xg3 ♖xg3 due to 28.♘xb7 ♕xb7 29.♕e5+ picking up the rook.

27.g4?!

Carlsen is eager to penetrate with his rook to h8, but this is too impatient. The steadier 27.♔e2 is objectively better, although the move played did provoke an immediate mistake.



27...♖a1+?

This sets the crude trap 28.♔f2? ♘xg4+, but if White avoids this then Black's check has simply weakened his position by allowing White's queen to penetrate to c8. After 27...hxg4 28.♖h8+ ♘g8 White is surprisingly unable to capitalize on his rook position, while Black threatens simply ...♔f8-g7 to free himself. In this case I don't see any real advantage for White.

28.♔e2 ♗xc5

Now 28...hxg4 may be met by 29.♕c8+ ♕d8 30.♘xb7!.

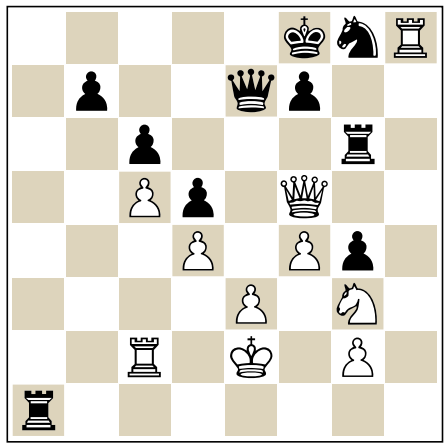
29.bxc5 hxg4

29...♕e6 30.♕f4 hxg4 31.♖h8+ ♔d7 32.♘g3 is also very unpleasant for Black.

30.♖h8+ ♘g8 31.f4

Material is still equal, but Black faces serious problems. White's queen and h8 rook occupy dominant positions, while the knight can easily move to g3 and then (after a queen move) to f5.

31...♔f8 32.♘g3



32...♖e6? Collapsing at once. **33.♕xg4 ♖g6** 33...♖xe3+ 34.♔f2 ♖f3+ leads nowhere after 35.gxf3 ♕e1+ 36.♔g2 ♕g1+ 37.♔h3. **34.♕c8+ ♕e8 35.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 36.♔f3 ♔d7 37.♖b2 ♔c7 38.♖h7 ♘h6 39.♘f5 ♖f1+ 40.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 41.♔xf2** Black resigned.

Thus Carlsen drew level with Ivanchuk and they shared first place in both the overall event and the rapid tournament. Grischuk was dominant in the blindfold, his good luck against Carlsen being balanced by the unfortunate episode against Aronian mentioned near the start of this article. It was great to see the mercurial Ivanchuk again finishing first at Amber, his previous triumph being in the very first tournament in 1992. Carlsen's success was also well-deserved, and it is interesting to note the different ways in which the winners achieved their scores: Carlsen drew only 3 games, while Ivanchuk didn't lose a single one of his 22 games, an amazing achievement.

Thus one of the most exciting Amber tournament drew to its close, and the annual gathering of grandmasters dispersed until, one may hope, the next time.

Nice Amber 2010 Combined — **cat. XX**

						TPR
1	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2748	14½	2863
2	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2813	14½	2857
3	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2790	13	2807
4	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2756	12½	2795
5	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	UKR	2725	12	2784
6	Vugar Gashimov	IGM	AZE	2740	11½	2760
7	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2750	11½	2759
8	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2750	11½	2759
9	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2782	11	2743
10	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR	2737	9	2682
11	Jan Smeets	IGM	NED	2651	6	2579
12	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2713	5	2538

A glorious past comes to life again

Yannick Pelletier

After some difficult years following the break-up of Yugoslavia, the countries that were born out of the former republic are showing renewed interest in the organization of large-scale chess events. That's very good news, as Yugoslavia was a country where chess was cherished as one of the most popular sports and as a pastime for millions of people. In 2009 alone, Budva (Montenegro) staged the European Individual Championship for men, while Novi Sad (Serbia) hosted the European Team Championships. Croatia continued the trend this March by organizing the European Individual Championships for men and women in Rijeka.

This town, located in the Kvarner Bay on the Adriatic coast, is the major port of the country. It is also the third largest city in Croatia, with around 150,000 inhabitants. Rijeka belongs to a touristic region which includes the Kvarner area and part of the Gorski Kotar. It offers varied landscapes for all kinds of visitors. The coast provides numerous beautiful beaches and obviously represents the main attraction. It also comprises picturesque islands, such as Krk, linked to Rijeka with a nearly 1500-meter-long bridge. People who do not appreciate the sea so much are presented with a nice alternative. The Dinaric Alps rise up nearby, while the Risnjak National Park is only around 15 kilometres away from the coast.

Rijeka itself is not really a touristic centre, as it is significantly

less attractive than the wonderful nature around it. As a consequence, the number of hotels is quite low for such an important town. Therefore the organizing committee of the European Championship decided to accommodate participants in Opatija. This little coastal town has been developed for tourism, but has fortunately kept the charm which made it popular among the nobility as early as the 19th century.

An unpleasant surprise that the participants faced upon arrival was the weather. Whereas on average, temperatures fluctuate between 10 and 15°C at this time of year, winter was still rocking hard on the Croatian coast! This culminated in heavy snowfalls on the fifth day. Such snow had not been seen for ages – as we were told by Croatian veterans! But life soon became normal again. Spring eventually settled down and allowed the chess players to stroll along Opatija's beautiful seaside.

The return of a mayor chess event to Croatia was welcomed by the old and the young.

The participants were generally satisfied with the official hotels proposed by the organizers, particularly as far as the quality/price ratio was concerned. True, there were some minor problems, such as the unavailability of internet connection in the rooms of most hotels. This detail usually greatly disturbs chess players (and poker fans!). Besides, the hotel where I stayed made a big point of advertising its Wellness & Spa; some players had even chosen it for this purpose. But they were disappointed to learn upon arrival that these facilities were being renovated.

At the newly built Zamet Centre in Rijeka, the organizers provided almost everything one can wish for at a playing hall: plenty of space for both tournaments, hot drinks and water as much as you wanted, and screens to allow the spectators to follow the main games.

Unfortunately, the distance between the playing hall and the hotels was an important downside. A 25-minute bus ride before the game is, although quite unpleasant, not a serious problem in itself. But when you combine this with a certain rule that forces players to be present at the start of the round under the penalty of losing the game, you cross the limit of what chess players can bear. In order to prevent the risk of any participant coming a second late due to traffic jams or any other unforeseen reason, the organizers decided to be ultra-cautious when scheduling the bus transfers. At the beginning of the event, buses left Opatija more than an hour before the start of the rounds. This left players waiting for around 40 minutes in the Zamet Centre before the referee's whistle... The situation improved a little after many participants signed a letter of protest. Towards the end of the event, the waiting time before the rounds had melted to about 20 minutes. It goes without saying that the Croatian part of the organization is far less responsible for this situation than the ECU or FIDE, who introduced the obligation to sit at the board at the beginning of the game during the last Olympiad.

The idea to implement the 'zero tolerance' rule for top events of smaller size such as the World Championship, Candidates' Matches, or even private closed tournaments, may be more or less justified because of the frequent presence of sponsors' representatives, officials or journalists at the very beginning of the rounds. True, a financial penalty or a warning would seem to be a more appropriate measure than the loss of the game. But the general idea can be understood and accepted. However, for mass events like the Olympiad or the European Championship, the rule hardly makes sense. When sitting at the board in those church-like quiet moments just before the rounds, I sometimes felt like a little schoolboy waiting for the teacher to enter the classroom.

One can only hope that FIDE and the ECU will admit that something is wrong and rethink some details in this matter. An idea would be to add a point in the Regulations which stipulates that the 'zero tolerance' may be implemented only if the venue is at

walking distance from the official hotels. This would not prevent me from feeling like a schoolboy, but I could at least decide whether I really wish to waste half an hour before the start of the lesson.

As far as the bus transfers are concerned, the Croatian organizers deserve criticism for only one thing. On the arrival day, some delegations had to wait for several hours at Zagreb airport before they were transferred to Rijeka. As it turned out, the organizers had hired big buses and did not intend to make them leave until they were almost full. I am not against attempts to save money, but such disrespect is not acceptable.

As in the past years, the European Individual Championship serves as a qualifying tournament to the World Cup (men) and the World Championship (women). Twenty-three is the magic number of qualifying places for the World Cup. When you look at the list of participants of the men's event, this is almost ridiculous! There were 95 players rated over 2600, and among them 9 were rated over 2700... I bet this was easily the strongest open tournament in the history of chess.

In this jungle, participants can have very different ambitions and strategies. Believe it or not, some people arrived fully convinced that they could win the tournament! In my opinion, only such extraordinary players as Magnus Carlsen, Veselin Topalov or Vishy Anand can objectively harbour such hopes. Although it is true that Sergey Tiviakov deservedly succeeded in living up to his ambitions in 2008, such a paranormal phenomenon does not happen very often. Many more players obviously aim at qualification. To achieve that, you have to fulfil several conditions. In the first place, you need to be a strong player. But this applies to about half of the 400 participants! Then, you should gather all your energy and indeed play very well. Let Lady Luck help you in one or two games, and you will have a fair chance! Luck can also take the shape of favourable pairings. Take Markus Ragger for instance. After an easy win in the first round, the Austrian number one faced an average opposition of 2663 in the remaining 10 games! When you score six points against such opposition, as Ragger did, you have good reason to be satisfied. But this great performance was not enough to even play the tiebreak play-off! On the other hand, Arman Pashikian showed great willpower after a bad start and ended 10th thanks to a 5 out of 5 finish! But he had faced only one opponent rated over 2600 in the whole tournament... Well, such is the hazard of the pairing system!

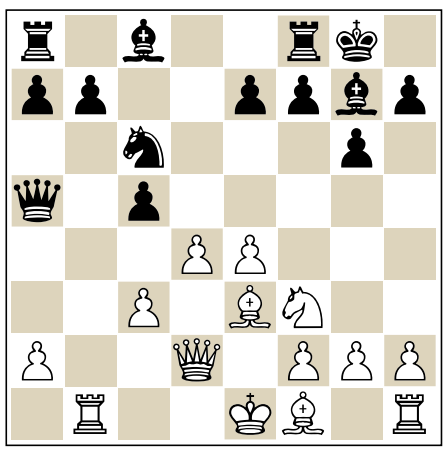
In a championship like this, International Masters or untitled players have an ideal opportunity to make norms, as many Grandmasters will be out of form or disappointed with their performance towards the end of the tournament. In other words, they will not be able to display their usual abilities and will give up points more often than usual. At this European championship, some of the participants could also try and reach a different goal, as there were special prizes for 'performance minus rating', rewarding players who outperform their own rating by a huge margin. I thought that these funny category prizes were a specialty of U.S. events, where private organizers try to make as much money as possible from a chess tournament and its participants. True, in Rijeka we did not see such shocking figures as in the U.S., since the special prizes amounted to only about 5% of the overall prize fund, but still such prizes do not belong in official tournaments. One may even wonder why the European Championship is open to amateur players, and why it does not have a minimal rating limit. Call me an elitist if you want, but by definition the European Championship should be a tournament for the elite.

The zero-tolerance rule regarding the players' presence at the board at the start of the game led to many protests, but some players found a creative solution to the inconvenience.

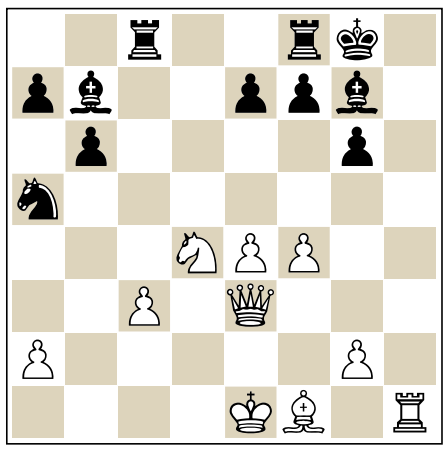
Let us finally turn towards chess matters! With so much at stake and with such a strong field, a wealth of wonderful games and a thrilling race to the title seemed to be guaranteed. As always, some of the rating favourites enjoyed a solid start, whereas others never really managed to run at top speed. When you begin with one or two shaky games, you often get entangled in a vicious circle. Even top players can suddenly lack self-confidence. The European Championship almost never offers you an easy game. You need to draw on your resources and use every single opportunity to come back. When I mentioned Arman Pashikian earlier, it was not at all in a negative sense. His achievement in the second half of the tournament is simply outstanding. Here is the game which probably put him back on the right track.

GI 4.9 – D85
Aman Pashikian
Gil Popilski
Rijeka 2010 (7)

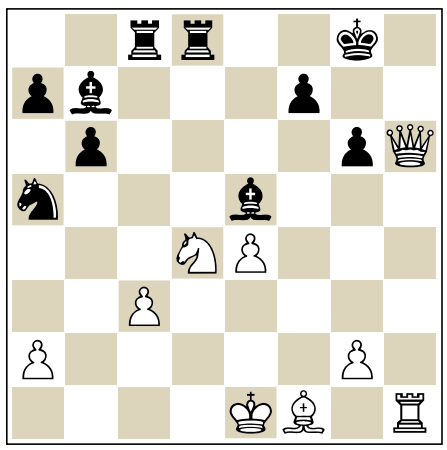
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗e3
This is the fashionable line against the Grünfeld these days, and Pashikian has got some experience with it. Feeling probably out of form with 3 out of 6, the Armenian grandmaster rightly enters a variation he knows well and is comfortable with.
7...c5 8.♘f3 ♕a5 9.♕d2 ♘c6 10.♖b1 0-0



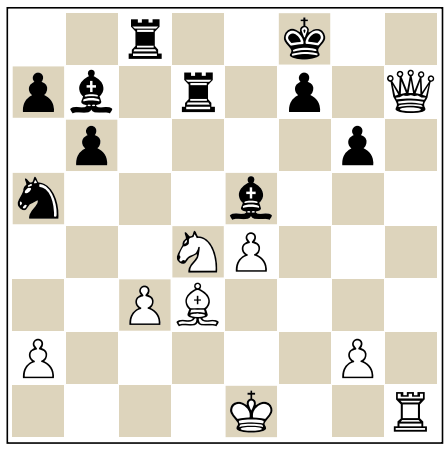
This leads to complicated positions in which Black sacrifices his queen for rook and bishop.
11.♖b5 cxd4 12.♖xa5 dxe3 13.♕xe3 ♘xa5 14.♘d4 b6
14...♗d7 has been tried more often.
15.h4 No matter how logical this new move is, there can be no doubt that Pashikian had analysed it at home.
15...♗b7 16.h5 ♖ac8 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.f4
White would like to play e5 and reinforce his attack on the kingside. By categorically preventing this, Black worsens his situation.



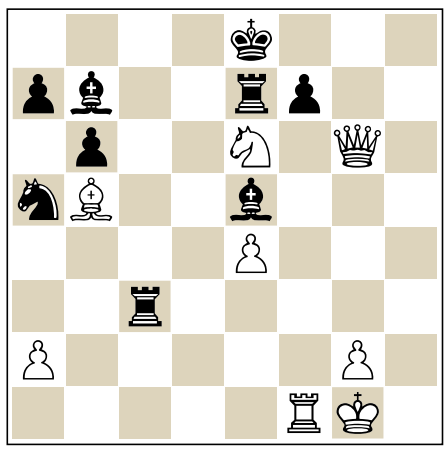
18...e5?!
18...♘c6 19.e5 ♘xd4 20.cxd4 ♖fd8 21.f5 looks very dangerous. Best was possibly 18...♖c5, although after 19.e5 ♖fc8 20.♖h3 ♘c4 21.♕f2 White's chances should be preferable.
19.fxe5 ♗xe5 20.♕h6 ♖fd8



21.♗d3!
Black may have overlooked his opponent's threat consisting of ♕h7, followed by 0-0! His position is lost already.
21...♖d7 22.♕h7+ ♔f8



23.0-0! ♖e7 24.♕xg6 ♖xc3?!
This loses at once.
25.♘e6+ ♔e8 26.♗b5+



Black resigned, as he can avoid mate after 26...♗c6 27.♕g8+ ♔d7 28.♕d8+ ♔xe6 29.♗xc6 only by giving up all his pieces.

But even Arman Pashikian would certainly advise us to try and start the tournament as convincingly as possible!

Baadur Jobava showed great determination throughout the event and indeed started like a rocket with 4 out 4. The Georgian was confidently leading the event with 7 out of 8, before losing against the future European Champion. Nevertheless, this defeat did not upset him too much, as he managed to share second place and later win the silver medal on tiebreak. Most of his games were highly interesting, and he eventually decided to annotate for us his 8th-round win against Zoltan Almasi.

NOTES BY

Baadur Jobava

QI 4.19 – E12
Baadur Jobava
Zoltan Almasi
Rijeka 2010 (8)

Greetings, dear readers! First, I should like to express my gratitude to the editor of the magazine for the opportunity to publish this game, as such a thing does not often happen.

This game was played in Round 8. At this point I had 6/7 and every justification for counting on a successful performance.

In 2009 I finished third in the same championship, and I was hoping, at the least, to repeat last year's success. By the will of fate I finished second, with which I was very happy, although I was left with the feeling that I could also have achieved more... Well, let's finally get down to an examination of the game.

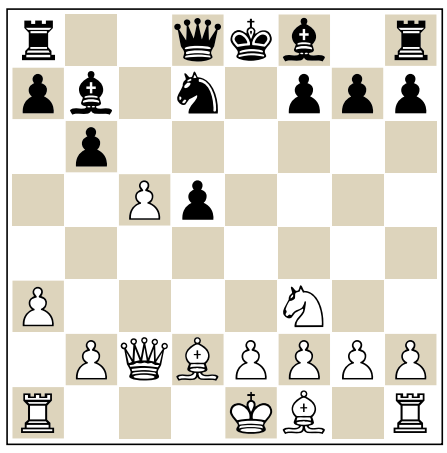
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3 ♗b7 5.♘c3

The continuation of a principled duel with Zoltan in the Petrosian Variation.

5...d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗d2 ♘d7 8.♕c2 c5

But this was a surprise! 8...♘5f6 9.e4 c5 10.d5 exd5 11.♘xd5 ♗xd5 12.exd5 allowed me to gain a slight advantage from the opening, and after an interesting fight I managed to win in Jobava-Almasi, Novi Sad 2009.

9.♘xd5 exd5 10.dxc5



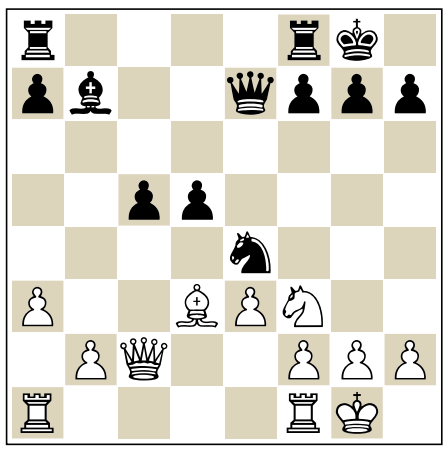
10...♗xc5!

A logical and strong novelty. Previously Black replied 10...bxc5. The move in the game pursues two aims: the rapid mobilization of the forces and piece pressure on the centre. True, there are also drawbacks – these are the isolani on d5 and the passive light-squared bishop, but, as the course of the game shows, Black's development outweighs the drawbacks, so that the novelty must be deemed to be a strong one.

11.e3 0-0 12.♗d3 ♘f6 13.0-0 ♘e4 14.♗b4 ♕e7

By this point I had already spent a considerable amount of time, since I was experiencing doubts. Zoltan, by contrast, had replied almost without thinking, which vividly demonstrates the depth of his preparation.

15.♗xc5 bxc5



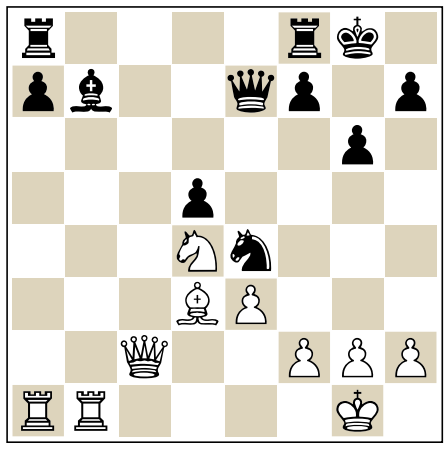
16.b4!

Up to here everything was more or less logical and almost forced, but this far from obvious positional pawn sacrifice is the only possibility of sharpening the play, as otherwise Black easily gains equality by comfortably deploying his men.

After the game I returned to the hotel and, quickly checking the quality of the game, I discovered that 16.b4 was the first line of the program. I once again realized that the human chess era has come to an end...

16...cxb4 17.axb4 ♕xb4 18.♖fb1 ♕e7 19.♘d4 g6

19...♖fc8 20.♕b2 (20.♕b3 ♖c3) 20...g6 21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♖a5 a6 23.h4 ♖c7 24.h5 would have led to a picture similar to the game.



20.♗xe4!

After this exchange the superiority of the powerful knight over the passive bishop clearly emerges.

20...dxe4 21.♕b3 ♖fc8!

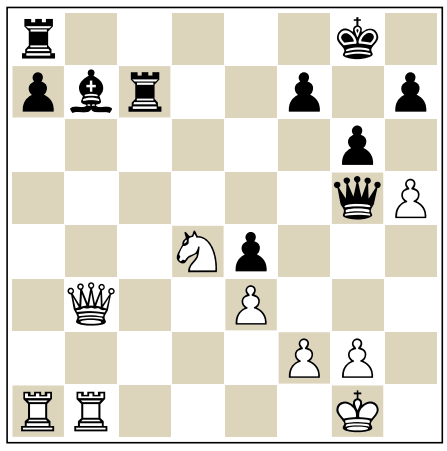
21...♗c8 22.♕d5 ♗d7 23.♖b7 ♖fd8 24.♖bxa7 ♖xa7 25.♖xa7 ♖c8 26.h3 ♗e6 27.♖xe7 ♗xd5 28.g4, and Black is obliged to conduct an unpleasant defence, and although a draw is the most probably result, it was clear that this possibility did not greatly attract my opponent.

22.h4

Of course, not 22.♕xb7?? ♖c1+.

22...♖c7 23.h5 ♕g5

After 23...a6 24.♖a5 ♖ac8 25.♕b2 White retains strong piece pressure for the pawn, and in some cases he has the plan of switching his rook to the h-file, after the inclusion of g3 and ♔g2.



24.♕d1!

The most difficult move in the game, after which I had 9 min-

Baadur Jobava burst away with 7 from 8, but in the end the Georgian grandmaster had to settle for second place.

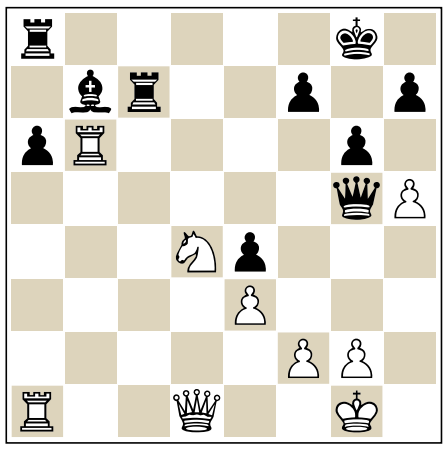
utes left on my clock for 16 moves, which should have put me on my guard...

With 24.♘b5 ♖d7 25.hxg6 hxg6 26.♖xa7 ♖xa7 27.♘xa7 I could have equalized, but after seeing the text move I was hoping for more.

24...a6

After 24...♕xh5 25.♕xh5 gxh5 26.♖a5, despite being two pawns up, Black has an inferior endgame, because of his bad bishop and numerous pawn island weaknesses.

25.♖b6



25...♗c8?!

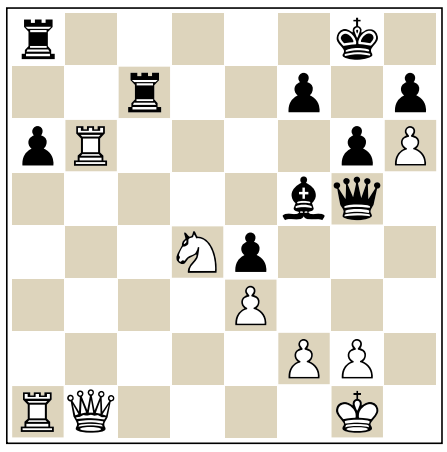
The first step towards the precipice. It was better to bring the reserves into play: 25...♖d8 26.♕b1 ♖dd7 27.hxg6 hxg6 28.♕b2, although at the board this position would not be easy to defend, since Black has absolutely no worthwhile plan, and he is forced merely to wait miserably.

26.♕b1 This move was, I think, overlooked by my opponent.

26...♗f5

26...♕xh5 27.♕xe4 ♖aa7 28.♕f4! was also unpleasant for Black, but apparently it would have been better.

27.h6



27...♖ac8? 27...♗d7 28.♕xe4 ♖e8 29.♕f4 ♕xf4 30.exf4 ♗c8, with a difficult endgame for Black, but this was already the only way out.

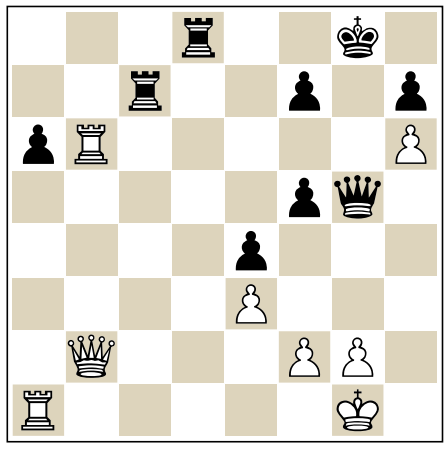
28.♘xf5 gxf5

Bad was 28...♕xf5? 29.♕b2 ♖c3 30.♖b8 ♕c5 31.♖xc8+ ♕xc8 32.♖a3 ♖c1+ 33.♔h2 f6 34.♖b3, and wins.

29.♕b2

And not 29.♖bxa6?! f4, and Black is fine.

29...♖d8

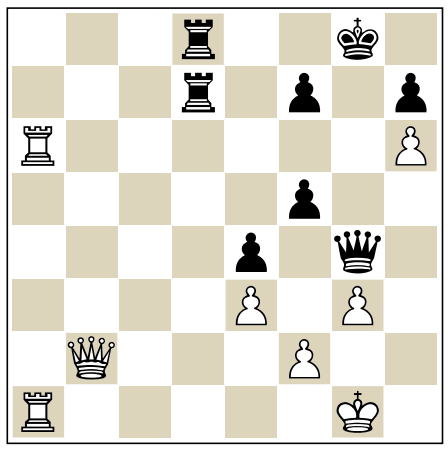


30.♖bxa6?

This squanders my entire advantage, and it was only because Zoltan was seriously short of time at the critical moment that I somehow managed to snatch a win.

The move called for was 30.g3! ♖cd7 31.♖axa6! ♕g4 32.♖d6 ♖xd6 33.♖xd6, with a winning position.

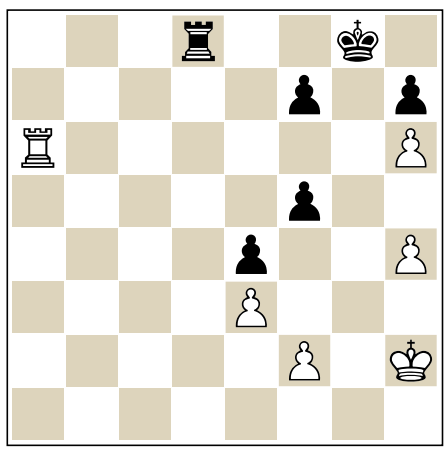
30...♖cd7 31.g3 ♕g4



32.♕f6

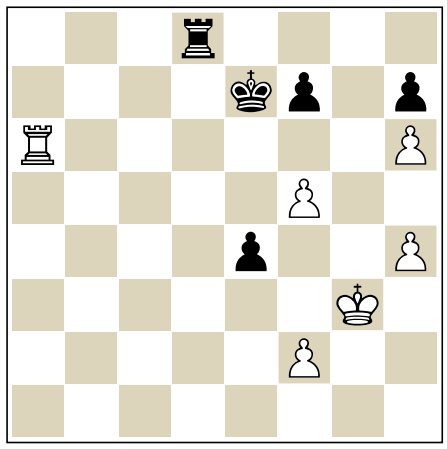
Or 32.♖e1 ♖d1 33.♕c3 ♖xe1+ 34.♕xe1 f6 35.♖a1 ♔f7, with an equal position.

32...♖d1+ 33.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 34.♔h2 ♕h5+ 35.♕h4 ♕xh4+ 36.gxh4



36...f4? Not yet the decisive mistake, but the prelude to it. 36...♔f8 37.♔g3 ♔e7 and, to all appearances, here everywhere it is a draw.

37.exf4 ♔f8 38.♔g3 ♔e7 39.f5



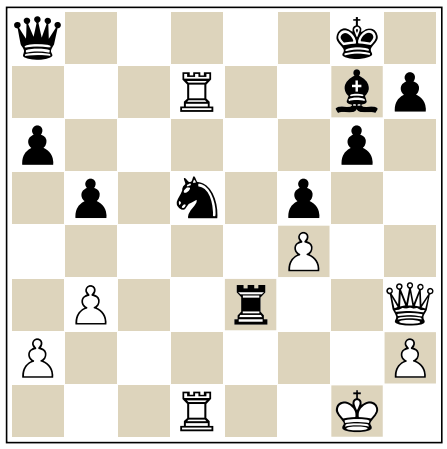
39...♖d3+?

But this is the decisive mistake. Let me show you a pretty drawing possibility: 39...♖d6 40.♖a7+ ♔f6 41.♔f4 e3 42.fxe3 ♖d4+! 43.♔g3 ♖e4 44.h5 ♖xe3+ 45.♔f4 ♖e1 46.♖a6+ ♔e7 47.f6+ ♔d7 48.♖a7+ ♔e6 49.♖e7+ ♔xf6 50.♖xe1.

40.♔f4 ♖f3+ 41.♔e5 ♖xf2 42.♖a7+ ♔e8 43.♔f6 ♔d8! 44.♖a4 e3 45.♖e4 e2 46.♔g7 ♖xf5 47.♖xe2 ♖f4 48.♔xh7 ♖g4 49.♖e5 f6 50.♖e6 ♔d7 51.♖xf6 ♔e7 52.♖f5 ♖xh4 53.♔g6

Black resigned.

If a good start is a required condition to perform successfully, the ability to follow through, as Baadur Jobava did, is a far less obvious quality. Had Michal Krasenkow converted his winning position against Georgia's leading player in the fourth round, things might have taken a different course for both of them. Here's the baffling end of that gripping game.



Krasenkow-Jobava
position after 32...♖xe3

After a turbulent middlegame Black has heroically fought himself back into the game.

Now, after 33.♕f1, the game would probably have ended in a draw. But Krasenkow missed a devilish trick and played

33.♕g2? only to be hit by the crushing **33...♗d4! 34.♖xd4 ♖e1+ 35.♕f1** The only way to keep drawing chances was 35.♔f2 ♖e2+ 36.♔xe2 ♘xf4+ 37.♖xf4 ♕xg2+. **35...♘e3!**, and the mating threats decide the game. White resigned.

After this upsetting game, the Polish grandmaster fought hard but did not manage to qualify.

I experienced a similar fate when I lost two games in a row in Rounds 5 and 6, and stayed on 3½ points longer than I had expected. To be able to keep strong nerves and repress one's emotions in such moments of high expectation is a crucial condition for success.

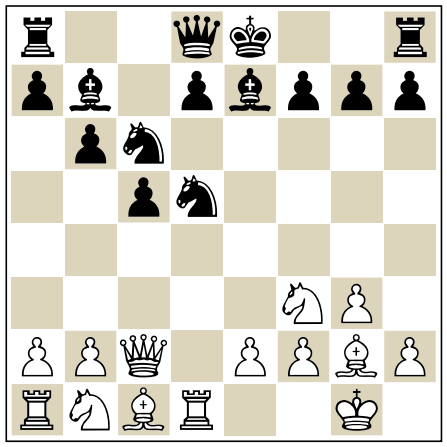
The first of my two losses was a bit unfortunate, however, as I got caught by my opponent's deep opening preparation.

QI 14.7 – E15
Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu
Yannick Pelletier
Rijeka 2010 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.♕c2 ♗b7 6.♗g2 c5 7.d5 exd5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♖d1 ♘c6

Rijeka 2010

			MP	TPR				MP	TPR				MP	TPR
1	Nepomniachtchi	RUS 2656	9	2868	16	Khismatullin	RUS 2657	7½	2695	33	Hracek	CZE 2615	7½	2681
2	Jobava	GEO 2695	8½	2839	18	Alekseev	RUS 2700	7½	2722	34	Belov	RUS 2619	7½	2651
3	Timofeev	RUS 2655	8½	2801	19	Sutovsky	ISR 2650	7½	2718	35	Navara	CZE 2708	7½	2708
4	Efimenko	UKR 2640	8	2791	20	Kurnosov	RUS 2674	7½	2721	36	Sargissian	ARM 2675	7½	2687
5	Lysyj	RUS 2615	8	2752	21	Halkias	GRE 2580	7½	2711	37	Volkov	RUS 2612	7½	2653
6	Z.Almasi	HUN 2720	8	2719	22	Hovhannisyan	ARM 2498	7½	2670	38	Howell	ENG 2612	7½	2642
7	Tomashevsky	RUS 2701	8	2746	23	Berkes	HUN 2659	7½	2705	39	Drozdovsky	UKR 2627	7½	2632
8	Rodshtein	ISR 2609	8	2728	24	Vuckovic	SRB 2630	7½	2689	40	Babula	CZE 2554	7½	2650
9	Lopez Salgado	ESP 2592	8	2685	25	Potkin	RUS 2606	7½	2749	41	Naiditsch	GER 2691	7	2693
10	Pashikian	ARM 2652	8	2683	26	Mastrovasilis	GRE 2511	7½	2698	42	Vallejo	ESP 2708	7	2710
11	Mamedov	AZE 2639	7½	2728	27	Grachev	RUS 2667	7½	2705	43	Fressinet	FRA 2670	7	2674
12	Movsesian	SVK 2709	7½	2726	28	Socko	POL 2637	7½	2668	44	Adams	ENG 2704	7	2691
13	Sokolov	BIH 2638	7½	2754	29	Inarkiev	RUS 2667	7½	2712	44	Stocek	CZE 2591	7	2717
14	Maiorov	BLR 2510	7½	2715	30	Nisipeanu	ROU 2661	7½	2705	46	Ragger	AUT 2572	7	2724
15	Tregubov	RUS 2625	7½	2694	31	Zviagintsev	RUS 2643	7½	2719	47	I'Ami	NED 2628	7	2619
16	Akopian	ARM 2688	7½	2725	31	Vorobiov	RUS 2616	7½	2675	408 players, 11 rounds				



11.♕f5

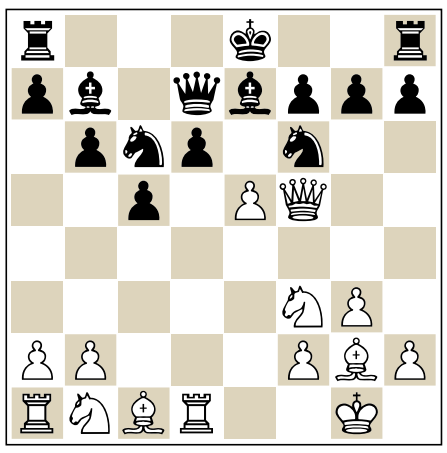
This is the old main move, while 11.♕a4 has probably become more popular after Aronian introduced 11...♘f6 12.♘h4!? at the Amber tournament last year. Incidentally, Bacrot and I had found this same novelty at a training session just a few days before! I have always believed in thought transference in chess!

11...♘f6 12.e4 d6

This is definitely a side-line compared to the main move 12...g6. It immediately appealed to me when it was introduced by Judit Polgar in her match against Evgeny Bareev in 2007. Indeed, it seemed to be a safe way to avoid the main line – exactly what lazy me was looking for back then!

Objectively, though, 12...g6 has been under certain pressure lately, due to Rodshtein's and Gelfand's efforts (see New In Chess 2009/7, page 38).

13.e5 ♕d7



14.♕c2!?

White went for the queen swap in all previous games, but Black's chances are not worse after 14.♕xd7+ ♘xd7 15.exd6 ♗f6 16.♖e1+ ♔f8 17.♘c3 ♘b4.

In fact, I had examined several deviations for both sides at different points, including the 14th move. But I had failed to spot Dieter's novelty... I consider this omission to be a more serious mistake than the one I committed on move 20. As Dieter told me after the game, he had been waiting since 2007 to play this novelty.

Well, as only Bacrot and I have played 12...d6 at a higher level after the stem game, Dieter can consider himself lucky to have been paired with me!

On the other hand, this attempt can only be considered a semi-bluff. Continuing in poker terms, the EV of 14.♕c2 clearly depends on its surprise effect. Even if Black should find the best defence over the board, the time spent in the process would almost certainly be reflected by a mistake in a later stage of the game. This means that in a single game, White's risk is minimal.

14...♘b4

I needed much time to recover from the shock. I looked at the alternative 14...♘d5, which is clearly bad, and also 14...♘g4, which is insufficient because of 15.exd6 0-0-0 (or 15...♗f6 16.♕e2+ ♔f8 17.h3 ♖e8 18.♕b5 ♘ge5 19.♘xe5 ♗xe5 20.♘a3) 16.♗f4 ♗f6 17.♘c3.

15.♕e2

After 15.♕b3 ♗d5 16.♕e3 dxe5 17.♘c3 ♖d8, White cannot benefit from the pin on the bishop on d5.

15...♗a6 16.♕e1 ♘c2 17.♕d2 ♘xa1 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♖e1+

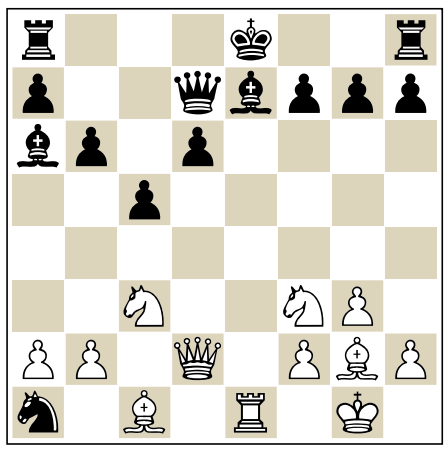
As this check did not seem deadly to me, I did not consider 18...gxf6 to be a serious alternative.

NEW IN CHESS

Yannick Pelletier had a promising start until in Round 5 he got caught by Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu's deep opening preparation.

19...♗e7 20.♘c3

White has given up the exchange and two pawns. Moreover, he still has to complete the development of his queenside. His compensation mostly consists in the perspective to win the ♘a1, and in his control of the central white squares.

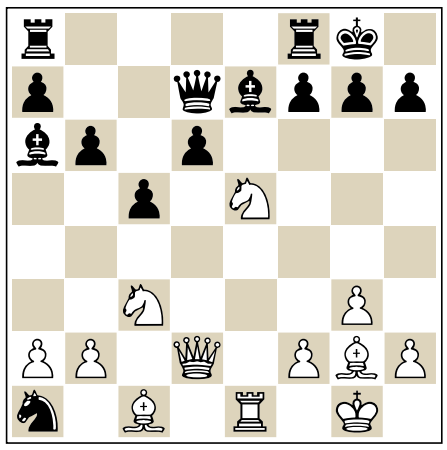


20...0-0?

This mistake results from a calculating mistake, which I explain in the note to 21...♕c8. The strongest move 20...0-0-0! was one of my candidates, but I refrained from looking at it once I determined that castling short was fine. I rejected my first choice 20...♗b7, however, because of the line 21.♕e2 ♖d8? 22.♗h3!. But the computer leaves d8 free for the queen and seems to believe that Black is far from dead after 21...h6 (sorry, too abstract for me!) or 21...0-0-0!? 22.♕xe7 ♘c2 23.♕xd7+ ♖xd7 24.♖d1 ♖e8.

I shall not reveal all my analysis of 20...0-0-0!; I can only tell you that White should be pretty careful after that, even though all three results are possible. This explains my earlier mention of 'semi-bluff'!

21.♘e5



21...♕c8?!

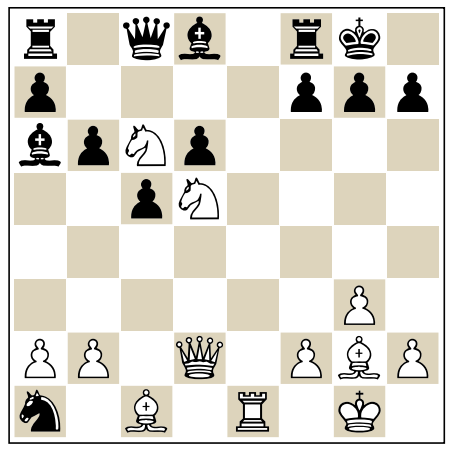
Too late! My intention had been 21...♕f5 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8? 23.♕d5 ♖f8, but I noticed that 24.♘c6! wins material. Nothing is changed by 23...♖e8 24.♘c6 ♕xd5 25.♘xd5 – there is no salvation.

But Black's relatively best choice was still 21...♕f5 22.♗xa8, followed by 22...dxe5 23.♗e4 ♕e6. I stopped here, thinking that White would certainly achieve a clear advantage thanks to the square d5. This is indeed the case after 24.b3!? (according to Dieter, his preparation went as far as 24.♘d5 ♗c4 25.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 26.b3 ♗xb3 27.axb3 ♘xb3 28.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 29.♕c2+, when White should also be better) 24...c4 25.♗d5 ♕g6 26.♖xe5 ♗f6 27.♖e4 cxb3 28.♗a3, with a white advantage.

22.♘c6!

If the bishop on g2 leaves the board, Black will be able to get some counterplay against the enemy king. Dieter's first independent move in the game is much stronger than 22.♗xa8.

22...♗d8 23.♘d5



23...♕g4

The alternatives are by no means more pleasant, but they might have allowed to fight a bit longer: 23...♔h8 24.♘xd8 ♖xd8 25.b3 or 23...♕d7 24.♘ce7+ ♔h8 25.b3.

24.b3 ♗b7 25.h3 ♕h5?!

This loses on the spot, but the position after 25...♕d7 26.♘ce7+ ♔h8 27.♗b2 f6 28.♗xa1 looks quite sad.

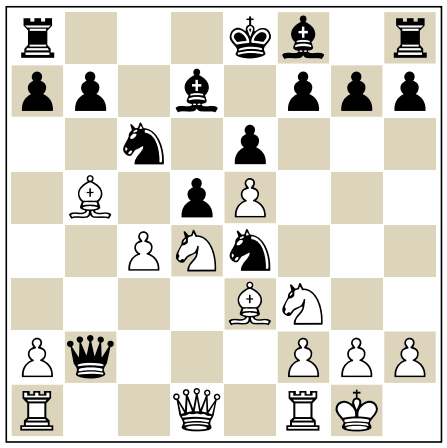
26.♘ce7+ ♔h8 27.♘f4

Black resigned.

I once read, probably in New In Chess, that chess players tend to consider victory to be the normal result, whereas they regard defeat as the last thing that should happen in life. While this sounds like a wise reflection on their character, one should not forget that chess players, like other sportspeople or artists, are perfectionists. To accept failure or mediocrity as part of normality does not fit at all. There can be no doubt that more people left the European

Championship disappointed than satisfied.

One could fill countless pages with the fate of plenty of the participants! But I'll content myself with examining one more sparkling moment before revealing, at last, the plot of this championship.



Svetushkin-Landa
position after 12...♕xb2

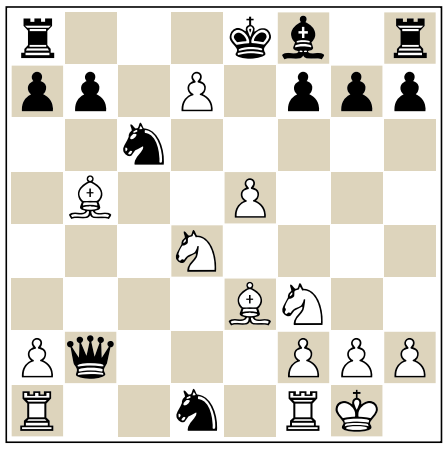
White has allowed his opponent to take on b2, but punishes him for this greedy action.

13.cxd5 ♘**c3** After 13...exd5 14.♖b1 ♕xa2 15.♘e2 White gets a tremendous attack.

14.dxe6! A powerful queen sacrifice!

14...♘**xd1** Declining the gift with 14...fxe6 would not release the pressure, as White would have a winning advantage after 15.♕d3.

15.exd7+



15...♔**d8**

Black tries to use the pawn as a shelter for his king, as 15...♔xd7 16.♖fxd1 ♔c7 17.♖db1!? ♕a3 18.♖b3, followed by 19.♖c1, would be killing.

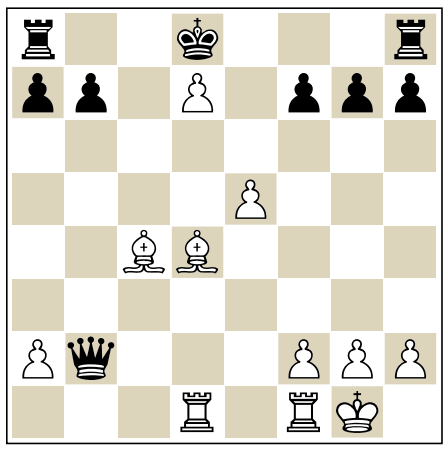
16.♖**axd1** ♘**xd4 17.**♘**xd4** ♗**c5**

The obvious 17...♕xa2 fails to 18.♖c1! ♕a5 19.♖c2 a6 20.♗c6! ♗c5 21.♗g5+ ♔c7 22.♗f3 ♔xd7 23.♘b3 ♗xf2+ 24.♖fxf2, as the black king will soon succumb.

18.♗**c4** ♗**xd4**

The lone queen will hardly be able to defend her king, but 18...♖f8 19.e6 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♕b4 21.♖fe1 was hardly more resilient.

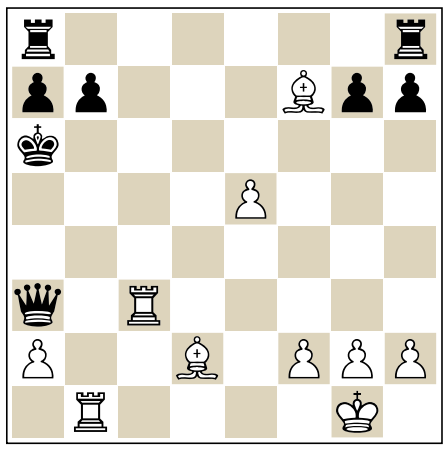
19.♗**xd4**



19...♕**c2 20.**♗**xf7** ♔**xd7 21.**♗**c5+!**

The most forcing.

21...♔**c6 22.**♗**e3** ♔**b5 23.**♖**b1+** ♔**a6 24.**♖**fc1** ♕**a4 25.**♖**c4** ♕**a3 26.**♗**c1** ♕**a5 27.**♗**d2** ♕**a3 28.**♖**c3**



White has found all the strongest moves and wins the enemy queen.

28...♕**a5 29.**♗**c4+ b5 30.**♗**xb5+** ♕**xb5 31.**♖**a3+** ♔**b6 32.**♗**e3+**

Black resigned.

Last year's championship was won by a young Russian player, Evgeny Tomashevsky. He could not repeat his success in Rijeka, but still scored a strong 8 points, without defeats.

This time, victory smiled on an even younger Russian. Nineteen-year-old Ian Nepomniachtchi dominated the event and did not show signs of weakness at any point. He remained faithful to his active and somewhat unusual style, but refrained from taking ill-considered risks. The Muscovite already made headlines in 2008, when he won the Aeroflot Open. His subsequent participation in Dortmund proved successful, as he shared second place in his first elite tournament. However, his three previous appearances at the European Individual Championship had been quite disappointing, as he never managed to compete at the top. But as time passes, Nepomniachtchi seems to have learnt from his earlier failures. In Rijeka, he found a balance, which enabled him to grasp the crucial moments of the tournament. Looking at his games, you cannot even find a single one where you would say: 'he's been lucky'! And even more impressive: for the first time since the European Championship was reduced to 11 rounds, the winner reached 9 points.

Ian Nepomniachtchi decided to comment his crucial encounter with Baadur Jobava, which eventually proved decisive for the title.

NOTES BY
Ian Nepomniachtchi

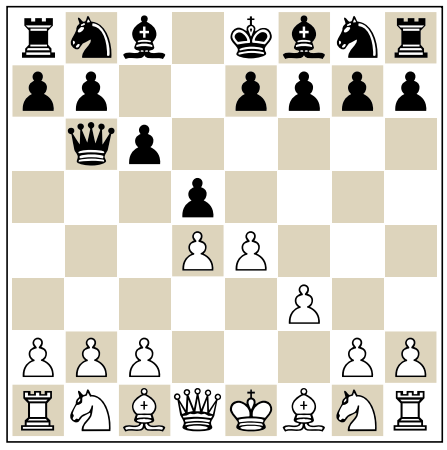
CK 2.2 – B12
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Baadur Jobava
Rijeka 2010 (9)

In Round 9 I faced the prospect of a game with the sole tournament leader, who was demonstrating energetic and uncompromising play. Overall in Rijeka I was able to exploit the white pieces more than successfully, especially as fortune smiled on me: after the rest day,

at the finish of the tournament I had 3 whites out of 4 games (it is rare to have such fortunate pairings), which undoubtedly gave me a considerable advantage over my rivals.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 ♕b6

Jobava had already employed this rare continuation against Artyom Timofeev, and since that game went well for him, I had no reason to expect that he would deviate, especially as 3...♕b6 is also regularly employed by other Georgian grandmasters.



4.a4!?

At this moment I was absolutely sure that I had just employed a strong novelty, and this, of course, gave me added confidence. Who knows how this game would have developed if I had been in the habit of looking (even if only briefly) at the games from the previous day. The point is that in the 8th round this move was made in the game Nabaty-Erdös. However, judging by the fact that my opponent stopped to think at this point, he too was not familiar with the source game ☺.

4...e5

The thematic move – against the strange flank thrust Black responds with a counter in the centre.

Of course, he should not play 4...a5?, in view of 5.exd5 cxd5 6.♘c3, with a serious advantage.

Another possibility was tried by Erdös: 4...dxe4 5.a5 ♕c7 6.fxe4 e5 7.♘f3 exd4 8.♗c4 ♗e6 etc.

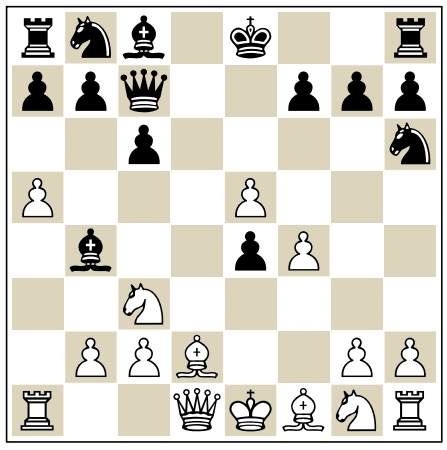
5.dxe5 dxe4 6.a5

White seizes space on the wing and drives the queen from its active position – this is the idea of his 4th move.

6...♕c7 7.f4 ♘h6 8.♘c3 ♗b4

A possible choice. 8...♗f5 would have led to sharp play, for example 9.♘ge2 (also interesting is 9.♕d4!? ♘d7 10.♘xe4 0-0-0 11.♘d6+ ♗xd6 12.exd6 ♖he8+ 13.♗e3 ♕b8, with wild complications: 14.a6 b6 15.0-0-0 ♗xc2 16.♕c3 ♗e4) 9...♘d7 10.♘g3 0-0-0.

9.♗d2



9...e3?

My opponent tried to play very quickly – possibly, in order to unsettle me. To some extent he succeeded in this: the move made in the game was one that I had not studied at all. Fortunately, now White completes his development in the most obvious way and, thanks to his total superiority in the centre, he gains a solid advantage.

9...♗xc3 10.♗xc3 0-0 was stronger, when in view of his good development Black can hope for counterplay: 11.♕d4 ♖d8 12.♕xe4 ♗f5 13.♕e2 ♘a6, with compensation.

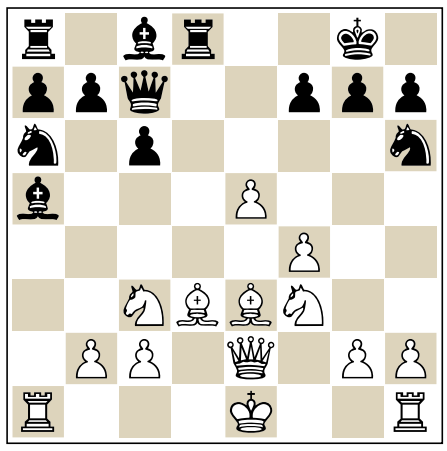
10.♗xe3 0-0 11.♘f3 ♖d8

After the hasty 11...♘g4 12.♗d2 Black is no better off – he has no way of exploiting the weakness of the f2-point.

12.♗d3 ♘a6

If 12...♗f5, then 13.♘d4 is good, as well as the simpler 13.0-0.

13.♕e2 ♗xa5



14.0-0

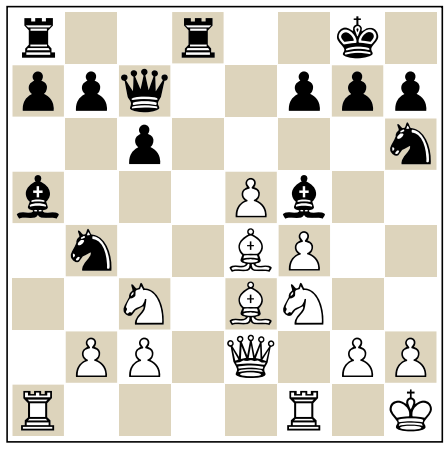
I considered the possibility of switching onto positional lines – 14.♗xa6 bxa6 15.0-0, but I could not resist the temptation to launch an attack: after all, White has all the preconditions for developing his initiative on the kingside.

14...♘b4 15.♗e4

It is very difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces without making serious positional concessions. The most logical decision is to exchange the dangerous light-squared bishop.

15...♗f5 16.♔h1!

As the Roman emperor Augustus liked to repeat – 'Festina lente!'



16...♗b6

Life is no easier for Black after 16...♗xe4 17.♘xe4 ♘d5 18.c4 ♘xe3 19.♕xe3 ♗b4 (the bishop must be urgently brought into play, even at the cost of a pawn) 20.♖xa7 ♘f5 21.♕f2 ♖xa7 22.♕xa7 ♕d7 23.♘f2.

17.♗xb6 ♕xb6

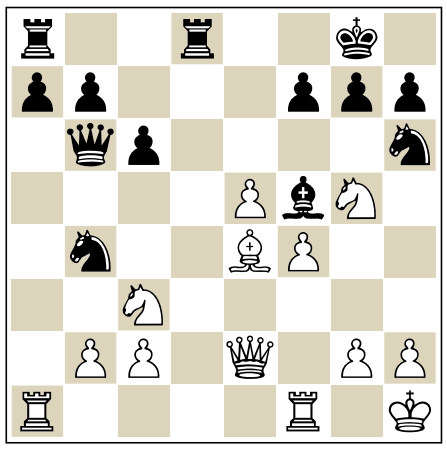
17...axb6? loses quickly, since it leads to the loss of a piece: 18.

The top three finishers: Baadur 'Ivanhoe' Jobava (2nd), Ian Nepomniachtchi (European Champion) and Artyom Timofeev (3rd).

♖xa8 ♖xa8 19.♗xf5 ♘xf5 20.♕e4 ♘xc2 21.♘d1!.

18.♘g5

Nothing forced is apparent, and so I simply bring up my forces to the scene of possible action.



18...c5?!

Now Black's position is strategically close to hopeless. Perhaps he should have tried to consolidate his queen by 18...♕c5, but it is not altogether clear how he can hold out after 19.♗xf5 ♘xf5 20.♕h5 ♘h6 21.♘ce4 ♕xc2 22.f5.

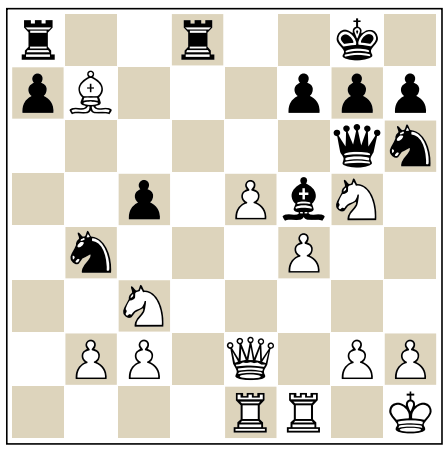
19.♖ae1

Simple and strong. The e5-e6 advance is hanging over Black's position like a Sword of Damocles.

19...♕g6

Black loses a pawn, but it is hardly possible to suggest anything else.

20.♗xb7



20...♘xc2

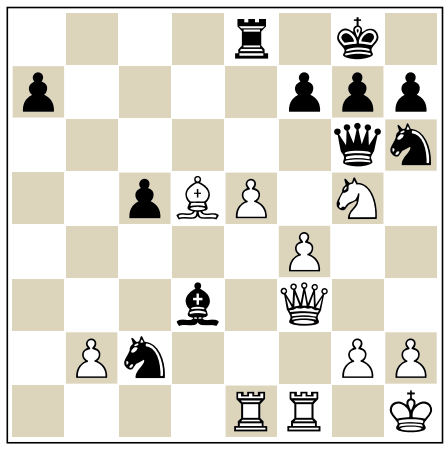
The critical, and at the same time losing continuation.

However, 20...♖ab8 21.♗e4 ♘c6 22.e6 would hardly have saved the position.

21.♘d5! Here 21.♗xa8! ♘xe1 22.♘d5 ♔f8 23.e6 followed by 24.♘c7 was somewhat more accurate, but at least the move in the game does not spoil anything.

21...♖xd5 Black loses immediately after 21...♔f8 22.♕b5.

22.♗xd5 ♗d3 23.♕f3 ♖e8



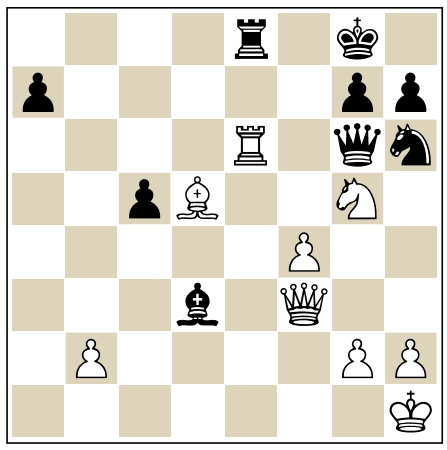
The black pieces are too vulnerable, and the knight on h6 has still not come into play. Therefore the time has come for the concluding breakthrough.

24.e6! ♘xe1 Or 24...f6 25.♗c6 ♗xf1 26.♗xe8 ♕xe8 27.♖xf1 ♘d4 28.♕d5, winning.

25.♖xe1 fxe6 25...♔h8 26.♖d1

fxe6 27.♗c6 ♖b8 28.♖xd3 ♘f5 was the relatively lesser evil.

26.♖xe6

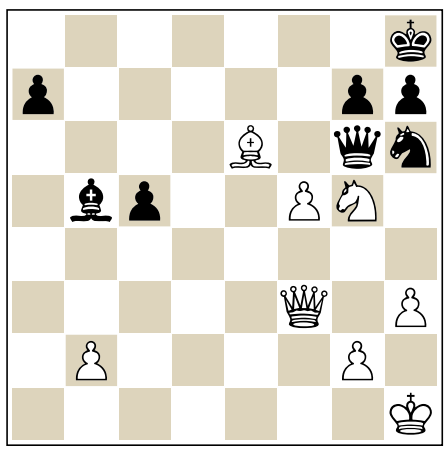


26...♔h8!

I had completely overlooked this move and it threw me into a kind of stupor. However, I managed fairly quickly to compose myself and find the simplest way to win.

If 26...♔f8 27.♕e3.

27.h3 ♖xe6 28.♗xe6 ♗b5 29.f5!



The victorious advance of the f-pawn, which began with the modest f2-f3-f4! ☺.

29...♕e8 30.f6 ♕f8 31.f7

Black resigned.

It is hard to over-estimate the importance of this game: after it I became the sole leader and I managed to retain this advantage – I scored 1½ points in the last two rounds, thereby retaining my lead over the numerous pursuers.

A special thanks to my friend and trainer Vladimir Potkin, who, although burdened with his own preparation, found time to help me grasp the subtleties of the move 4.a4! ☺.

If you exclude the host country, Russia lined up the most participants... and obviously not the least of them! Almost half of their 56-men delegation had a rating over 2600. With such an armada, Russia also managed to snatch the bronze medal, thanks to Artyom Timofeev. The 25-year-old played near the top during the whole tournament and clearly deserved this honour. He beat Rauf Mamedov in a nice last-round effort, which he annotates for us.

NOTES BY

Artyom Timofeev

SI 33.12 – B38

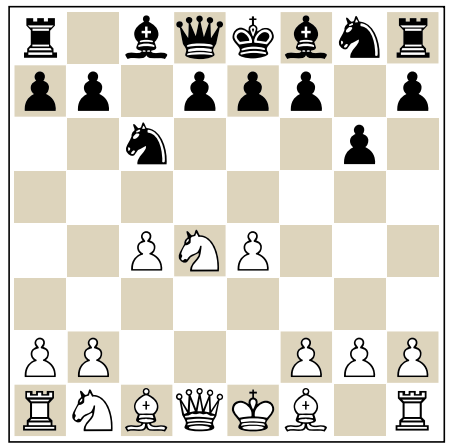
Artyom Timofeev

Rauf Mamedov

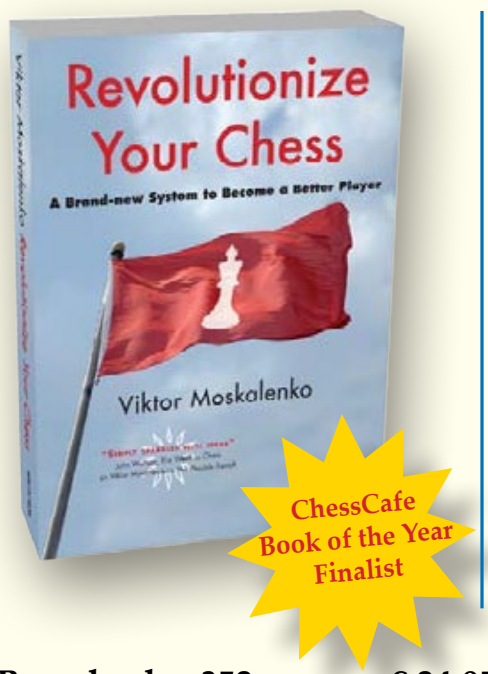
Rijeka 2010 (11)

This game was very important in the competitive sense. A win would enable me to share 2nd-3rd places in this very strong European Championship.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4



The Maroczy set-up does not aim for a big advantage in the opening, as in the case of the sharper 5.♘c3, but the resulting positions are fairly safe. In view of the fact that a loss would have obliged me to take part in a tie-break to quali-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"There is a lot to be learned in the practical part of the book (..) In the chapters on the middlegame my eyes have finally been opened."
Richard Vedder, Schakers.info

"I enjoyed this book. There is a lot to read, a lot to absorb. I know it's only January but, at the end of the year, when I compile my list of the top books I have reviewed in 2010, I'll be surprised if 'Revolutionize Your Chess' isn't included."
Marshtower Chess Reviews:

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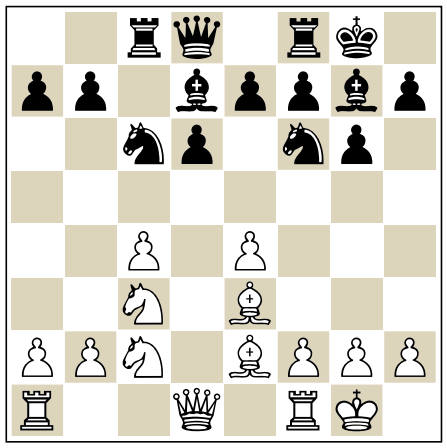
fy for the World Cup, this state of affairs suited me.

5...♗g7 6.♗e3 d6 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗d7 10.♘c2

A perfectly possible alternative to the usual 10.♕d2. The resulting positions are less well-defined.

10...♖c8



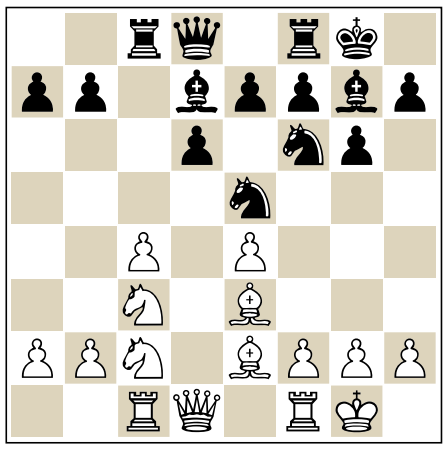
11.♖c1

This move took me a lot of time, as there was a very wide choice, including 11.♕d2 and 11.f3. Sometimes it is more advantageous to place the rook on b1, to prevent the queen from going to a5.

After 11.♕d2 I did not like 11...♘e5, when I am forced to play 12.♘a3 with a complicated game (if 12.b3 b5).

11...♗e6

11...♘e5 is more critical:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 12.b3 a6 13.♕d2 b5, and Black has good counterplay;

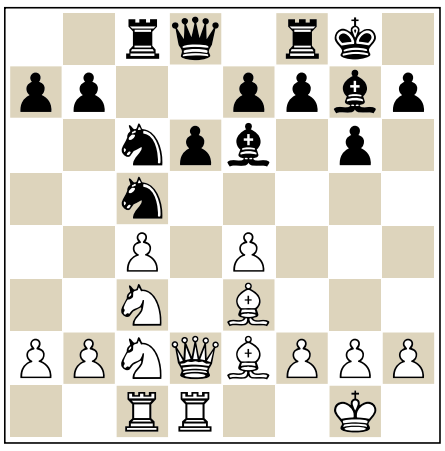
B) 12.c5!? with the idea of 12...dxc5 13.f4 ♘eg4 14.e5 ♘xe3 15.♘xe3 ♘e8 16.♖c2, when Black has problems with the coordination of his pieces;

C) 12.♘a3. This was played by Grischuk in a simultaneous display. It is possibly the strongest. The idea is to suppress the opponent's counterplay and then improve the placing of the pieces.

12.♕d2 ♘d7 13.♖fd1

The result is a well-known set-up on Black's part, ♗e6/♘d7, with an extra tempo for White (...♗d7-♗e6).

13...♘c5



14.b4!?

The key moment in the game! Black faces a difficult choice: whether to part with the pride of his position – his bishop on g7 – or end up in a passive position.

Even after analysis I find it difficult to say which continuation is correct. For the pawn White does indeed have excellent compensation.

It was possible to play more quietly: 14.f3 a5 15.b3, with a stable advantage for White, but I decided to play more actively, to try and exploit Black's slightly passive play.

14...♘d7

It was highly probable that Rauf would make this move, since King's Indian and Dragon players, as well as Grünfeld players (to whom I would assign myself) endeavour in most cases to retain the dark-square bishop. Even the winning of the exchange does not always tempt us!

Nevertheless, 14...♗xc3 15.♕xc3 ♘xe4 16.♕b2, and Black has several possibilities, but everywhere White's initiative outweighs the material:

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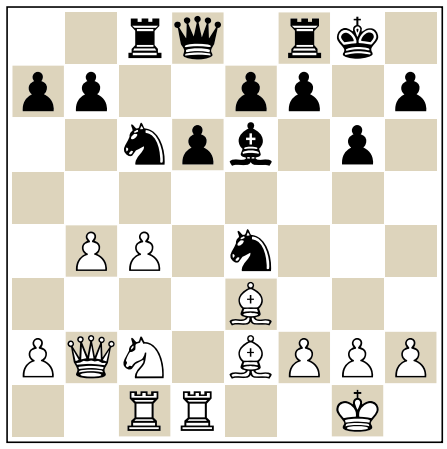


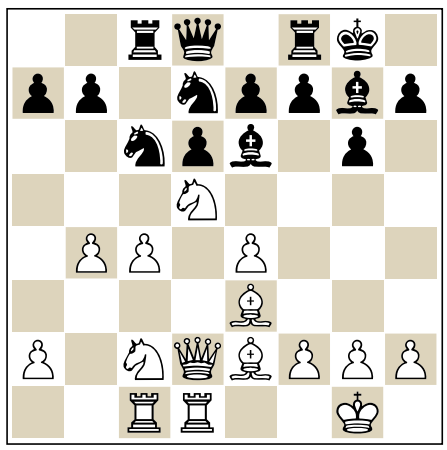
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 16...♘f6 17.c5 d5 18.♗h6 ♖e8 19.b5 ♘a5 20.♘e3, and White is better;

B) 16...f5 17.f3 ♘f6 18.c5 a6 19.♗h6 ♖f7 20.a4, with initiative;

C) 16...♘e5 17.c5 ♗c4 18.♘d4 ♗xe2 19.♕xe2 ♘f6 20.♗g5, with a slight advantage.

15.♘d5



White is better. This is how all the books evaluate this type of position. Black has difficulty in finding a plan.

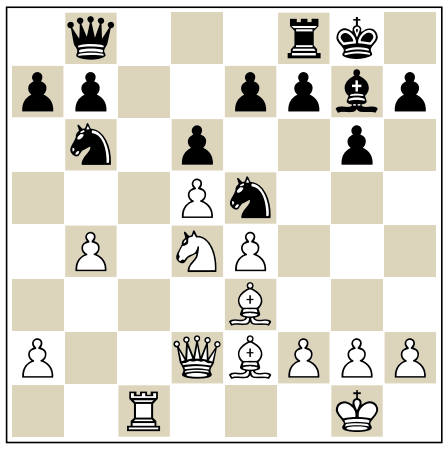
15...♘ce5

Rauf decides to simplify the position, but this does not affect the evaluation.

16.♘d4 ♗xd5 17.cxd5 ♘b6

The cramped nature of Black's position is felt. 17...♘f6 18.f3 ♕d7 19.♗b5, and he is forced back.

18.♖xc8 ♕xc8 19.♖c1 ♕b8



20.♘b5

A good move. The support from under the knight is removed. The alternative plan was 20.♖c2 and 21.♕c1.

20...♘ed7

After 20...♖c8 21.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 22.♕c2 a6 23.♘c7 ♘d7 24.a4 White has the clear plan of advancing his queenside pawns.

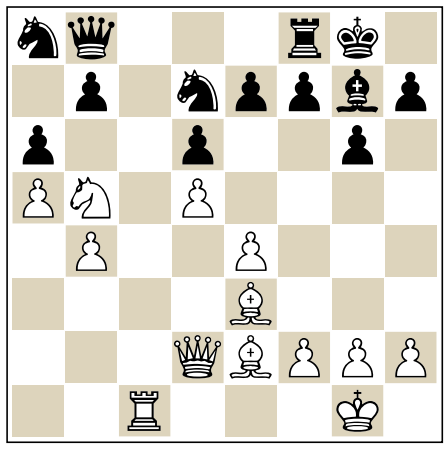
21.a4 a6

It is hard to offer Black any advice. Also bad was 21...♘xa4 22.♗xa7 ♕a8 23.♕e3! ♖c8 24.♘c7, and wins.

22.a5 ♘a8

In this position I stopped to think. If the knight retreats, Black exchanges rooks and will have chances of defending.

In the end I arrived at the idea of incarcerating my own knight, but also not allowing the black knight to come into play.



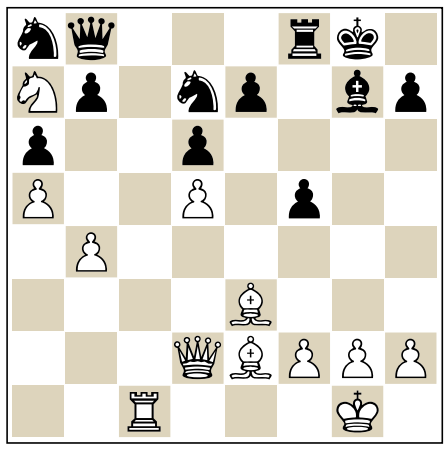
23.♘a7!? f5 Rauf tries to divert me from carrying out my plan.

In the event of further passive play, the following amusing variation was possible: 23...♘c7 24.♕c2 ♘e8 25.♘c8 ♗f6 26.♕a4, and the knight is trapped!

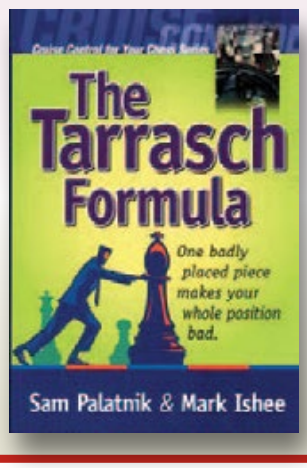
24.exf5

When I played 23.♘a7 I was already intending to sacrifice my knight and therefore I again avoided safer continuations. E.g., 24.f4 ♘f6 25.exf5 gxf5 26.h3 ♘c7 27.♗f3. White stands better, but the role of my knight on a7 is greatly reduced.

24...gxf5



I thought that now was the right time to sacrifice the knight, since



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later this continuation will be less effective and the knight might become stuck.

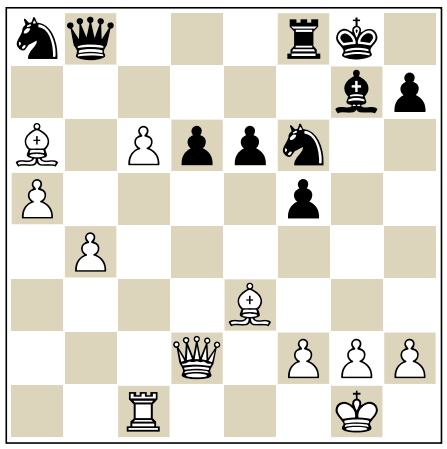
25.♘c6! bxc6 Black has to take. If 25...♕e8 then 26.♘d4.

26.dxc6

As a result of the transformation, Black's position has become very dangerous, since my passed pawns may quickly decide the outcome. The best chance for Black is to occupy strong points with his knights, try to advance his central pawns, and create problems for my king. My task is simpler – simply to advance my pawns.

26...♘e5

The more thematic 26...♘f6 was the move I was more afraid of. Everywhere White has a great advantage; it is all a question of practical chances: 27.♗xa6 e6, and now:

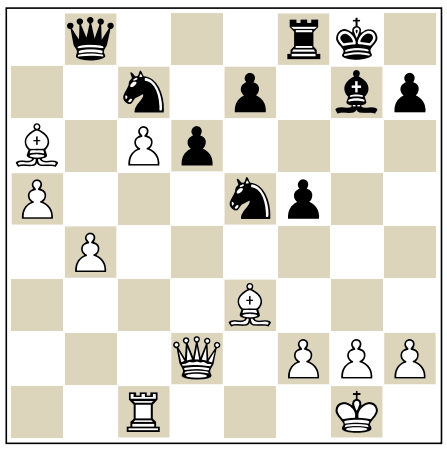


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 28.♗b7 ♘e4 29.♕c2 ♘c7 30.a6 and White should win;

B) 28.b5 ♘c7 29.b6! (the pawns prove to be stronger than two pieces!) 29...♘xa6 30.♕e2 ♘c7 31.a6 f4 32.a7 ♕a8 33.b7 fxe3 34.♕xe3, and wins.

27.♗xa6 ♘c7



28.♗e2

I decided to play safely. 28.♗b7 was possibly more accurate, with the idea of pushing the rook's pawn, but I wanted to advance my entire pawn mass. There can follow 28...e6 (28...♔h8 29.a6 ♕e8 30.♗b6) 29.a6 (29.♕xd6 ♘c4) 29...f4 30.♗xf4 (30.♗d4 ♕e8 31.a7 ♕g6) 30...♖xf4 31.♕xf4 ♘d3 32.♕e3 ♘xc1 33.♕xc1 ♕a7, when White's position is still won, but difficulties remain.

28...♔h8

28...d5 is met by 29.b5.

29.♗b6

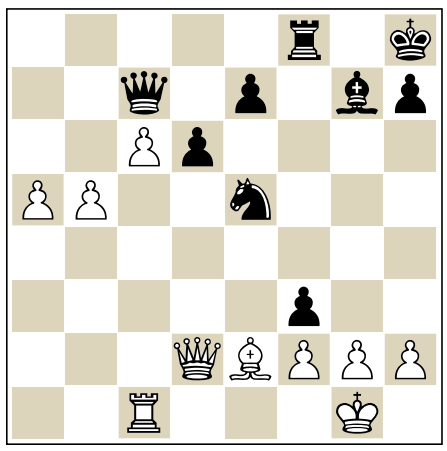
A continuation of the same strategy. 29.a6 was simpler and stronger. After 29.b5!? ♘xb5 30.♖b1 ♘xc6 31.♖xb5 ♕a8 White should win, but it is a pity to give up the pawns.

29...f4

Black loses after both 29...d5 30.♗xc7 ♕xc7 31.♕xd5 and 29...♘a8 30.c7 ♕b7 31.a6.

30.♗xc7 ♕xc7 31.b5 f3

Black's hope is to expose the king and give perpetual check, since the pawns can no longer be stopped. I need to play accurately. If 31...♕c8 32.c7.



32.♗f1

Probably the final subtlety. 32.b6 seems to gain a tempo, but in fact it merely drives the queen to an active position. After 32...♕c8 33.♗f1 fxg2 34.♗xg2 ♕g4 35.♔h1 ♕h5 36.h3! ♗h6 37.♕d1 White also wins, but he would have to find several difficult moves, as otherwise Black has strong counterplay.

32...fxg2

After 32...♕c8 33.g3 it is not possible to approach the king.

33.♗xg2 ♕c8

If 33...♖g8 then 34.♔h1.

34.c7

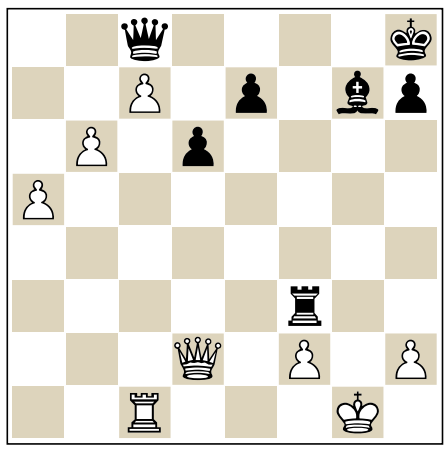
This is the point of White's 32nd move – one of the pawns is already on the 7th rank, which makes things much easier. Black's position is lost.

34...♘f3+

Another idea is to erect a barrier in front of the bishop with ...e6/...d5, but it also fails to save Black: 34...♖g8 35.♔h1 e6 36.f4 ♘g4 37.b6 d5 38.♗h3.

35.♗xf3 ♖xf3 36.b6

The most accurate. For the moment checks are not threatened, and another pawn must be advanced.



36...♖f8

Or 36...♕g4+ 37.♔h1 ♕e4 38.c8♕+ ♖f8+ 39.f3 ♕xf3+ 40.♕g2, and wins.

37.♕d5 ♗e5 38.b7 ♕f5

38...♕h3 also does not help: 39.♕g2 ♗xh2+ 40.♔h1 (40.♕xh2? ♖g8+) 40...♕h6 41.c8♕.

39.♕g2

The only move, but good enough.

39...♗xh2+ 40.♔xh2 ♕f4+ 41.♕g3

Black resigned. After 41...♕xc1 the b-pawn promotes, although throughout the game the favourites in the race were its neighbours on the a- and c-files.

Mom's the word

The field of the European Women's Championship in Rijeka was possibly even more prestigious than in the men's event. Except for World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk, almost all the best representatives of the continent took part. Monika Socko had the best start until she lost the lead to Victorija Cmilyte, who in turn stumbled to the new champion in the very last round.

Pia Cramling shares her impressions of her second European championship. In the process, the mother of a seven-year-old daughter reveals the secret of the final standings.

After I had spent almost a year without chess, I made a comeback in 2003. To my surprise I realized that having become a mother and having only played one small one-day tournament close to my home for the past 10 months (a record for me!), was not at all bad. I enjoyed playing chess more than ever and that year became one of my most successful years. The peak of 2003 for me was winning the European Championship for women in Istanbul.

After that championship I also started to compete in more women's events than I ever did in my younger years. Although there is still a long way to go, these tournaments are highly appealing and enjoyable, with many more women and girls playing. And the level going up.

The European Championship is one of my favourites. I like the formula a lot: an open tournament in which everyone can participate. To my mind it is also one of the best ways to promote chess for women. But apart from this championship surprisingly few women opens are held during the year. Eleven rounds seems like a good number when there are so many participants, but at the same time it is a drawback, as the players have to stay away from home for almost two weeks. This is a very long time when you are a mother with a family. As one player told me in Rijeka, she could now make a comeback to chess because her children are now grown up. This shows how important it is to have different types of tournaments, including shorter ones (I, for one, hope there will be more knock-out tournaments) for women who may not have the same time to be away from home as men.

For 20 years, my husband Juan Manuel and I have travelled together to tournaments. It means a lot to me to have him with me when I play. Now we cannot go together so often, as our daughter goes to school and one of us has to stay at home and take care of her. In Istanbul in 2003 Juan Manuel could still come with me, but to Rijeka I had to go alone.

When I am at home, I try to work on chess regularly, but I did not prepare specially for the European Championship. I am still a very active player and play lots of games every year, and if you add to that that I am a mother(!) there was not really time for that. Therefore I decided to regard the Championship as just another 'ordinary' tournament and see if I could play some good chess without any expectations at all.

I was very pleased with the playing conditions in Rijeka, where we had a huge hall for both tournaments, something I value a lot. I normally play long games, but when I had some time I liked to walk around and watch the other games.

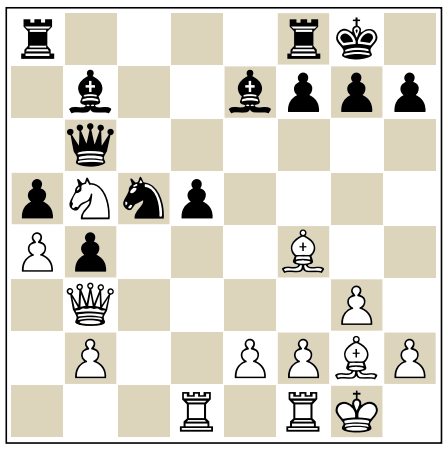
Opatija is a beautiful and lovely place to stay at, and I enjoyed walking around the town. At first I was not too happy that we had to transfer by bus from Opatija to get

ZELJKA MALOBABIC

European Women's Champion Pia Cramling together with her daughter Anna and her husband Juan Manuel earlier this year in Gibraltar.

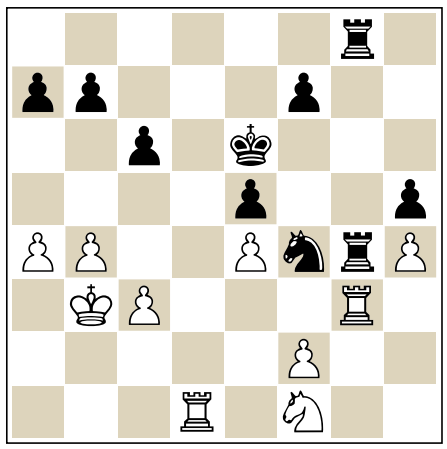
to the playing hall in Rijeka, as it was quite time-consuming. However, I soon realized that the comfort of the Hotel Adriatic, with excellent food, a swimming pool and an Internet room, really made it worth travelling every day.

In the first few rounds I could decide some of my games with a tactical idea.



Molchanova-Cramling
position after 17...♘c5

White has to move her queen, instead Tatiana Molchanova played **18.♗e3??** and after **18...♕xb5!** she resigned.



Cramling-Zawadzka
position after 33...♖g4

Here I played **34.♘e3** 34.♖xg4 and then putting the knight on f5 was probably stronger, but my idea is also good. **34...♖xg3 35.fxg3 ♖xg3 36.♘f5 ♖d3 37.♘g7+ ♔e7 38.♖xd3 ♘xd3 39.♘xh5**, with a large advantage.

Since 1990 I have played against Ketevan Arakhamia many times in all kinds of tournaments and championships, and we know each other very well. When we met in Round 5, Keti played a good game, keeping control of the position, and I lost track in the middlegame. A dubious move was soon followed by a bad one and my position went down. After losing this game I felt that I needed to concentrate better. My win in the next round in a long game against Elena Cosma, who defended well, was one of the crucial moments for me in the championship.

Another one was when I could turn a losing position into a very favourable one against Monika

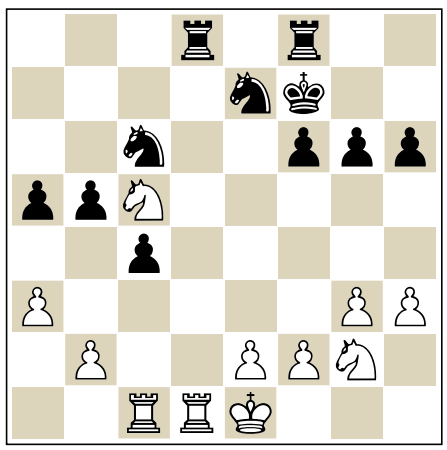
Socko in Round 8. In the end the game was drawn, and I was a bit disappointed that I did not play more accurately and make more of the big advantage I had in the endgame.

Thanks to wins in Round 9 (against Khurtsidze) and Round 10 (against Stefanova, which you will find annotated below), I had the chance to sit on first board for the final round and play for the title...

It is amazing that once again Victorija Cmilyte and I had to play each other at the very end of a European Championship. In Turkey in 2003 I met her in the tie-break for the title and I won the rapid match 1½–½. In Plovdiv, in 2008, Victorija beat me in the last round and finished second again.

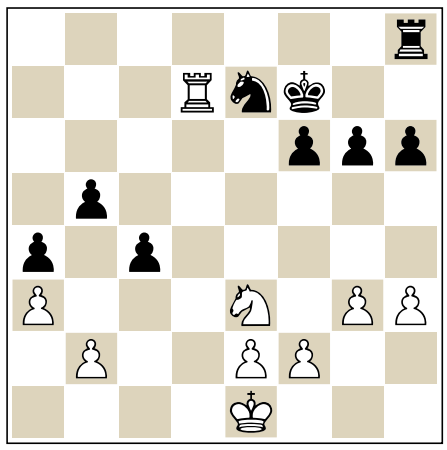
Victorija had had a good tournament and was in the lead, half a point ahead of me, so I had to win to take the title. Still, I did not think so much about that. I just wanted to play a game and see what I could do.

I was far from satisfied with the opening. Something clearly went wrong and Black got a comfortable position. But when we went into the endgame I thought that I had equalized and was no longer worried about my position. After Victorija made a couple of inaccurate moves I got the chance to get an edge.

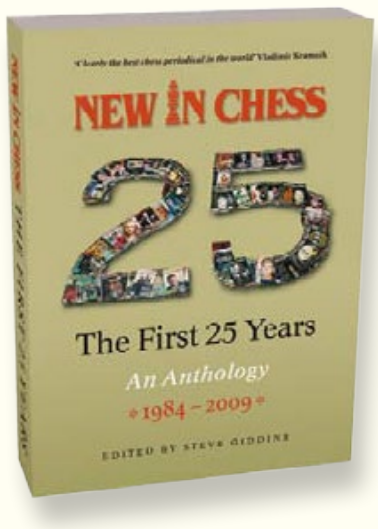


Cramling-Cmilyte
position after 26...a5

Here I was pleased with my position... **27.♘e3** 27.a4! bxa4 28.♘e3 was thematic, destroying Black's pawn chain and giving me a clear edge. I saw it, but decided to go ahead with the idea I had planned some moves earlier regardless. I thought it would give me an advantage and leave Black passive. **27...a4!** My intention to break up the pawns was now clear so Victorija played this move quickly. **28.♘d7 ♖h8 29.♖d6 ♘b8 30.♖cd1** Not 30.♖xf6+? losing material: 30...♔g7. **30...♘xd7 31.♖xd7 ♖xd7 32.♖xd7**



32...♔e6?? Black felt the pressure of the clock and played this move quickly. But when the b-pawn goes, there is not much hope for Black. Only now did I start thinking that I might win and become European Champion – it was a great feeling! 32...♖b8 was necessary, and this was the position I had aimed for, thinking that it would be more pleasant to play for me than for my opponent. It is very important to keep the knights on the board, at least until I could activate my king. Now 33.♖d6! is a good move to keep the black pieces passive. If Black does not do anything concrete I will play ♔d2-c3-b4. Now 33...♖c8 (33...b4? 34.♘xc4 does not work for Black) 34.♔d2 ♖c5 (34...h5 35.♘d5, and the knight swap is now favourable for me, as my king is more active



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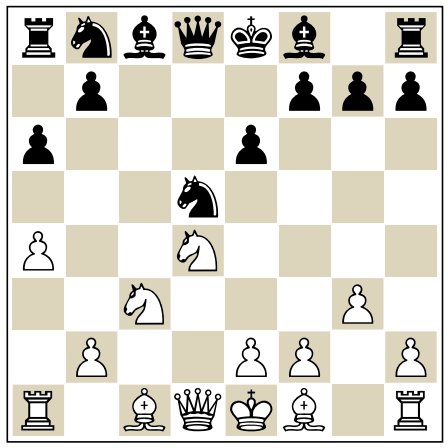
Going into the last round, Victorija Cmilyte was leading the field, but in the end she once again had to settle for second best.

and will go for the b-pawn. But I have to control the d-file with my rook to prevent Black from entering my position and attacking the pawns from behind with her rook) 35.♔c3, and I have a small but pleasant edge with my active pieces. **33.♖b7 ♖c8 34.♖xb5 c3 35.♖b6+ ♔f7 36.bxc3 ♖xc3 37.♖b7! ♖c5 38.♖a7 g5 39.♖xa4** 39.♔d2! would have been more exact not to let Black attack my pawns from behind. **39...♖c1+ 40.♔d2 ♖h1 41.♖a7 ♔f8 42.h4 gxh4 43.gxh4 ♖h2 44.♘g4 ♖xh4 45.♘xf6 ♔f7 46.♘d7** (46.♘g8!), and White went on to win.

It was great to become European champion once more, and I am pleased that I managed to win although I was one of the oldest participants. I believe that my experience of having played chess for such a long time and also having won the title before helped me. Curiously enough, every time Victorija and I have played in the European Championship she has finished second. Although it probably leaves a bitter-sweet feeling to be so close and lose the title at the last moment, three silver medals is a tremendous record. When Monika, Victorija and I were waiting together for the trophies to be distributed at the closing ceremony we discovered what could be 'the secret' of our success. We are all mothers and our final ranking corresponded with the number of children we have.

SL 3.1 – D15
Pia Cramling
Antoaneta Stefanova
Rijeka 2010 (10)

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 a6
The Chebanenko Slav once more! We had played this line several times already.
5.a4 e6 6.g3 c5
This used to be considered dubious, but recently Black has come up with a new idea. Our encounter in Krasnoturinsk 2008 went 6...dxc4 7.♗g2 c5 8.dxc5 ♕xd1+ 9.♘xd1, and I went on to win after a long game.
7.cxd5 cxd4!?
Instead of 7...exd5 and entering a Tarrasch position. But then the moves a4 and ...a6 have been included, which I think should be to Black's advantage, as square b4 is weak now. But Black has often got into trouble in this line.
8.♘xd4 ♘xd5
That is the main difference – Black now takes back with the knight. I have some games in my database with this position, but White failed to win any of them!

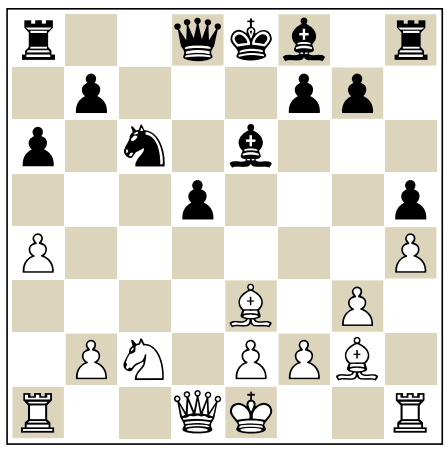


9.♘c2!? ♘c6
9...♘xc3 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.bxc3 was the alternative, leading to an endgame similar to the main line we played in Krasnoturinsk.
10.♘xd5 exd5 11.♗g2 ♗e6 12.♗e3!
I did not like 12.0-0 in view of 12...♗c5. During the game I thought Black was fine here, as I cannot control square d4. This has also been played in one game.
12...h5
I was surprised by this move, as I had expected Antoaneta to play more quietly and develop her pieces on the kingside. I did not want to allow her to play h4, so I thought that my next move was a normal reply.
13.h4

Rijeka 2010 (Women)

				TPR
1	Pia Cramling	SWE	9	2677
2	Victorija Cmilyte	LTU	8½	2622
3	Monika Socko	POL	8	2595
4	Marie Sebag	FRA	8	2555
5	Tatiana Kosintseva	RUS	8	2595
6	Natalia Zhukova	UKR	8	2556
7	Yelena Dembo	GRE	8	2545
8	Antoaneta Stefanova	BUL	7½	2552
9	Anna Muzychuk	SLO	7½	2550
10	Nadezhda Kosintseva	RUS	7½	2540
11	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	7½	2550
12	Nino Khurtsidze	GEO	7½	2526
13	Almira Skripchenko	FRA	7½	2514
14	Anna Ushenina	UKR	7½	2511
15	Iweta Rajlich	POL	7½	2477
16	Nastassia Ziaziulkina	BLR	7½	2543
17	Ekater. Kovalevskaya	RUS	7½	2457
18	Jolanta Zawadzka	POL	7	2478
19	Hoang Thanh Trang	HUN	7	2442

158 players, 11 rounds



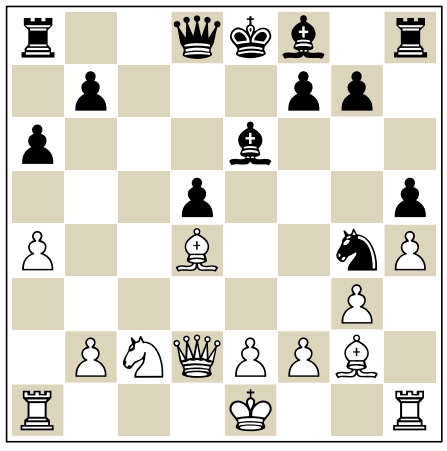
13...♘e5?!

I think this is wrong, as my bishop will be very strong on the diagonal d4-h8 now.

The normal developing move 13...♗e7 was better. If I castle, Black can choose between trying to open the position in front of my king or playing quietly and castle. And if I choose to leave my king in the centre, for example with 14.♘d4 (maybe 14.♕d2 ♘a5 15.♕d3 is a better try), then 14...♗b4+ 15.♗d2 ♕b6 looks close to equal.

14.♗d4 ♘g4 15.♕d2

I could also have castled, but with her knight in front of the king I got worried that Black would find some tactics to attack my king, which is why I decided to postpone castling and instead to try and activate my knight. I was quite pleased with my position here. I have a nice positional advantage with good control of d4 and Black cannot easily develop her kingside.



15...♖h6?

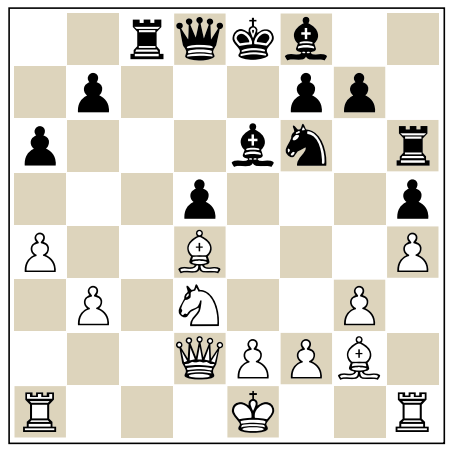
A strange move – as Black will no longer be able to castle. Furthermore, it is not clear what the rook is doing on the sixth rank; but it encouraged me to postpone castling for a bit longer.

16.♘b4

Maybe first 16.♖c1 to prepare ♘b4 was better, and if 16...♖c8 then 17.0-0, with a large advantage.

16...♖c8 17.b3 17.♘d3 ♖c4 18.e3 was also possible.

17...♘f6 18.♘d3



18...♗f5?!

I thought the idea behind this move was to connect the rooks, planning ...♘e4 and ...♖hc6, but this does not really work.

I had expected 18...♘e4, and after 19.♕b2 Black could perhaps try 19...g5 to justify the earlier move ...♖h6 and create a more imbalanced position.

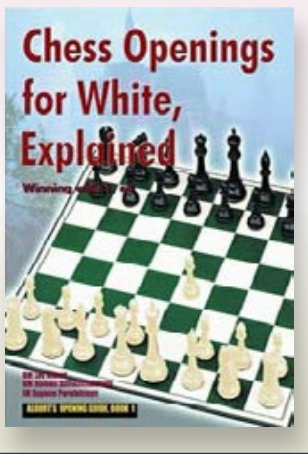
19.0-0 ♗e7

Now 19...♘e4 20.♕f4 wins a tempo: 20...♕d7 21.♖ac1 ♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♗d6 23.♕e3.

20.♖ac1

Black is not only struggling with her isolated d-pawn, but her rook on h6 is also completely out of play. It is not easy to find good moves in such a difficult position.

20...♖c6 21.♘e5 ♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♔f8 Finally Black decides to hide her king. At this point I had a chance to improve my pieces with tempo, which I missed.



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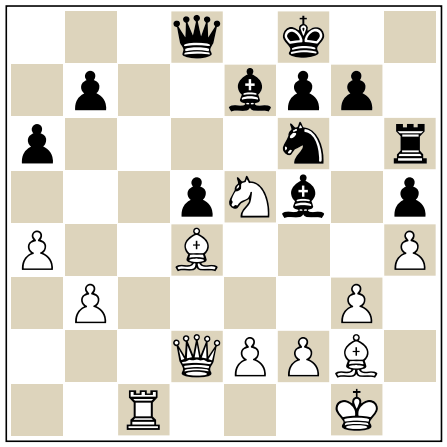
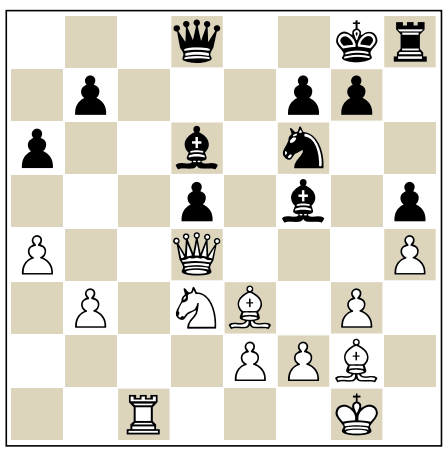


23.♗e3

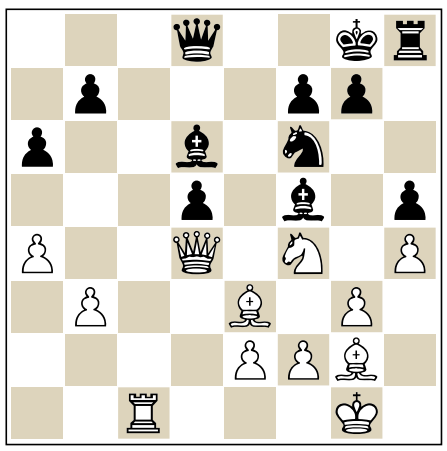
Correct was 23.♕f4! ♗e6 24.♖c7 ♕a8 (not 24...♕xc7 25.♘g6+!) 25.♕c1, with a very nice initiative. Black would need her rook to defend the queenside. If 25...♗d6 then 26.♗c5! wins.

23...♖h8 24.♕d4 ♗d6 25.♘d3 ♔g8



26.♘f4

Going for the d-pawn. Another way was 26.♗g5 ♗e7 27.♘c5 ♗c8 28.♗xf6 ♗xf6 29.♕xd5 ♕xd5 30.♗xd5 b6 31.♘e4, winning.



26...♔h7

There was no good way to keep the pawn. If 26...♗e6 then 27.♘xd5 ♘xd5 28.♗xd5 ♗e5 29.♕d3! is the strongest and White wins: 29...♗xd5 30.♖c5.

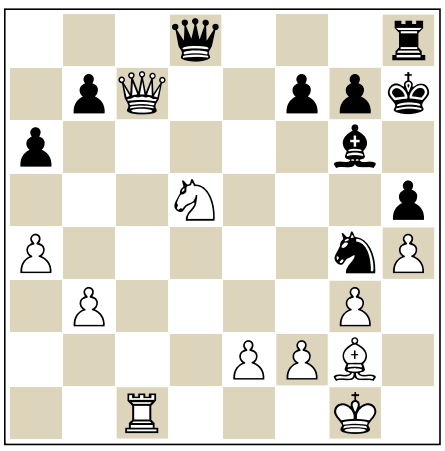
26...♗xf4 keeps the d-pawn, but is hopeless after 27.♗xf4, followed by ♖c7.

27.♘xd5 A pawn up and keeping the initiative. White is winning.

27...♘g4

Black wants to keep the pieces on the board and avoids 27...♘xd5 28.♕xd5 ♗g6 29.♗e4!, which loses a second pawn.

28.♗f4 ♗xf4 29.♕xf4 ♗g6 30.♕c7



30...b5

Trying to get some activity for the pawns. Keeping the queen with 30...♕a8 31.♘f4 or 30...♕e8 31.e4 would just leave my pieces very active.

31.♕xd8 ♖xd8 32.axb5 axb5 33.♖c5 f6

If 33...b4 then 34.f3 ♘e5 35.♘xb4.

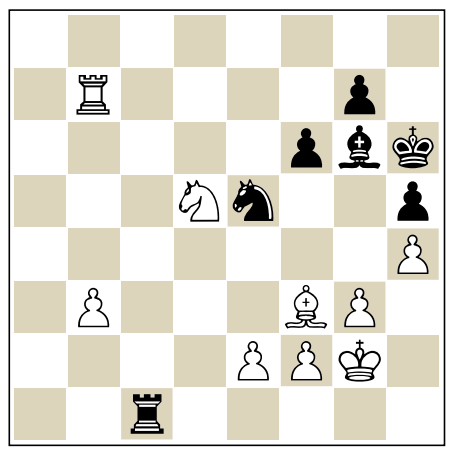
34.♖xb5 ♖c8 35.♗f3 ♘e5 36.♔g2 ♖c1 37.♖b7 ♔h6

The top three in the women's section: Victorija Cmilyte (2 children), Pia Cramling (1 child) and Monika Socko (3 children).

Avoiding ♘xf6+. She cannot play 37...♔h8 38.♘f4, winning the h-pawn.

38.♖b8 ♔h7 39.♖b7 ♔h6

I wanted to get closer to the time-control at 40 moves before playing my next move.



40.♘f4 ♘xf3 41.exf3

41.♔xf3 was also fine, but I thought the text was easier, as I am quicker now and have some threats on the kingside.

41...♗f5 42.♖b5 g6 43.♖b6 ♔g7 44.♘d5 ♗d3 45.♖b7+ ♔h6

After 45...♔f8 the knight has time to defend f3: 46.♘xf6 ♗f1+ 47.♔h2 ♗e2 48.♘h7+ ♔g8 49.♘g5.

46.♘xf6 g5 47.hxg5+ ♔xg5 48.♘e4+ ♔f5 49.♖f7+ ♔g6 50.♖f6+ ♔g7 51.♖d6 ♗f1+ 52.♔h2 ♗e2 53.♘g5 ♖c3 54.b4 ♗xf3 55.♘xf3 ♖xf3 56.♔g2 ♖b3 57.♖b6 ♔f7 58.b5 ♔e7 59.♖b8 ♔d7 60.b6 ♖b2 61.b7 h4 62.♖h8

Black resigned.

Among the Sturdy Dutch

In his previous article about the Big Lasker Book Hans Ree was so carried away by the many aspects of Lasker's life that he neglected the great champion's chess career. This time there is more about chess, mainly played on Dutch soil.

The cover of the latest issue of the German magazine *Kaissiber* (January-March 2010) shows a portrait of Emanuel Lasker, created in 1929 by the Dutch artist Louis Hartz (1869-1935). According to *Kaissiber*, in the Netherlands the painting had been thought irretrievably lost for a long time.

Actually, it is in the possession of the American collector David DeLucia. He granted permission to the editors of the Big Lasker Book to reproduce it and they, not being able to use colour in their book, passed on the permission to *Kaissiber*.

DeLucia had purchased the painting at the demise of the Manhattan Chess Club, where it had been since Lasker's death. Illegally! cries my Dutch patriotic soul. As explained in both *Kaissiber* and the Big Lasker Book – to be called BLB from here on in, inviting comparison with Roald Dahl's lovable BFG, the Big Friendly Giant – the painting was only lent to Lasker by the Dutch chess federation under the condition that after his death it would go to the National Chess Building in The Hague, home of the venerable chess club DD, short for Discendo Discimus.

Legally the case is long past its period of limitation. Morally I trust that both the Manhattan Chess Club and the present owner acted in good faith. I am not calling for a recuperation action. But still, it was and should still be Dutch property. It would find a worthy place in the rooms of DD.

Stately mansions

The full name of that club, Discendo Discimus, is a Latin expression that means 'while learning we learn'. A learned society indeed. It is one of the oldest clubs in the Netherlands, founded in 1852. Its premises are spacious and dignified, with names and portraits of great chess players prominent on the walls. It is possible to order food or drinks and have them brought from downstairs by a waiter. Just as a chess club should be and often was in the past, but is only rarely now.

A club member once told once that when he first entered the place as a youngster, he was intimidated by its dignity, feeling that it was too good for him. Over the years he got used to it, and now he feels at home there, with the one reservation that he sometimes felt as if the members of the club had all been around from the time of his first visit, maybe even from the foundation in 1852. It is certain that at least some of the old members are no longer around, e.g. Alexander Rueb, the first FIDE President, and grandmaster Hein Donner.

They have a club song, and if proof were needed that the current members were not present at the foundation, it would suffice to note that very few of them know the words of it, or even the fact that it exists.

I do. The melody is that of a well-known Dutch song 'Amid the bronze-green oak trees' which was usually sung, especially by drunk students, with a more primitive text, 'Oakwood is oakwood, oakwood is wood' and that repeated ad infinitum and ad nauseam.

The text of the DD club song, though it has lost something in translation, is still quite forceful:

Hail Discendo Discimus
Plunge into battle
Show that Thou art the strongest club
in the whole of the Netherlands
Mate to Thy opponents
Be not satisfied with less
Hail Discendo Discimus
Three times hail DD!
Hail Discendo Discimus
Three times hail DD!!

When the song was written, this 'Hail' did not yet have the sinister nazi connotations that it acquired later. In fact the words were written by the Jewish club member

Leopold Bernard Jacobsen, who died in Auschwitz concentration camp in 1943.

I got my early chess education at the club for youngsters The Black Foal, an offspring of VAS, the United Amsterdam Chess Society, a club as old and venerable as DD Its beautiful premises were almost a twin of those in The Hague, located near the centre of Amsterdam in a quiet alley with beautiful trees. Coming from a bleak Amsterdam suburb I felt at home there from the first moment. Both DD and VAS had strong ties with Lasker.

Both clubs, formerly the two strongest in the country, have lost some of their lustre, but an important difference is that DD's energetic president, Alexander Rueb, was wise enough to buy the premises of the club at a time when houses like castles were cheap, while VAS always remained a renter, which in the 1960s inevitably led to the club being thrown out by market forces. Since then it has bravely led a nomadic existence, moving from one low-rent establishment to another.

Bamboozling the innocent

In the latter part of his life Lasker often visited the Netherlands. The correspondence IM Peter de Jong, who wrote the BLB's chapter on Lasker's relations with the Netherlands, found more biographical material in Dutch sources than in German ones. Obviously, Germany has caught up by now.

Lasker's first (and last) tournament on Dutch soil was organized in Amsterdam in 1889 by the club VAS. It is the event in which Lasker played his celebrated double bishop sacrifice against Bauer. He finished only second in the tournament, a point behind Amos Burn, due to a loss against the Dutch master Louis van Vliet.

In that game Lasker, as Black, optimistically played the gambit 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.dxe5 ♘d7. Trying to make up for the loss of a pawn – and, according to Robert Hübner's notes in another chapter, overlooking a pretty undeserved winning possibility, Lasker was beaten in 24 moves by a devastating attack.

One day during the tournament, at a chess café, Lasker entertained his Dutch friends by sacrificing almost all his pieces against one of the weakest players of the establishment to mate his king with a pawn, one of the few units still left to him.

Apparently Lasker enjoyed such tricks. There is a well-known story that has him receiving queen odds from an unsuspecting traveller and then, after having managed to lose a few games that way, demanding to give queen odds himself, because the empty square next to the king would give him manoeuvring space. Without his queen Lasker won the game, of course.

In BLB's chapter about Lasker and the Berlin bohemia, Susanna Poldauf mentions a coffeehouse game in which Lasker spent his first five moves just to make his king's knight and rook exchange places. He also liked to watch games by very weak players, to study their thought processes.

Capa on Lasker

In 1908, almost 20 years after his Dutch tournament, Lasker came to the Netherlands for the second time to play three games against Abraham Speijer. It was a rather informal occasion. The newspaper *De Telegraaf* quoted Lasker: 'Yes, you know, I am coming here only to entertain people pleasantly. Therefore I will impose no conditions at all.' This means surely that Lasker's financial conditions had already been met.

Lasker beat his hosts at billiards and conversed in Dutch, learning many new words but failing systematically at his attempts to order cranberry compote in Dutch. More than a hundred spectators watched the match being played in the Pavilion of the Vondelpark in Amsterdam. Not a big crowd for the reigning World Champion, it seems to me.

Through the years Lasker would give many simuls in the Netherlands, and from the start there were discussions about his fees. Lasker was known to ask a stiff price for his services. On the other hand, an age-old English saying has it that in matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch is giving too little and asking too much. It seems almost a miracle that the Dutch and Lasker came together so often.

In 1920 Lasker made a Dutch tour, giving 22 simuls. A special one was organized by Discendo Discimus at the Café Hollandais in The Hague. Among the opponents were Dutch top players such as Loman and Oskam. Te Kolsté, also one of the best Dutch players, and even Réti are said to have assisted them. Capablanca was also present and later adjudicated the unfinished games 'when the police hour came'.

De Jong quotes from the magazine of the Dutch chess federation a description by Capablanca of Lasker's simul: 'Look closely how he plays and you will see the difference. It's not in strength of play, but in the system. For one thing, he needs already half an hour to light the twelve cigars that he smokes on an evening. If he has no cigar left, he cannot go on. That makes him as helpless as a baby whose rubber teat lies on the floor. Furthermore he has no sense of time. At half past one in the night he looks as cheerful as a professor at a morning lecture. In short, Lasker thinks that value lies in steadiness and endurance, while I on the contrary have the motto "quickness and smartness". I think that finally it is a matter of mentality.'

It appears that at that time, when the tortuous negotiations about a world championship match that had started in 1911, were finally coming to a successful conclusion, Lasker and Capablanca were on good terms. It had been different in the past and it would be so again in the near future.

Quiet grinds the Dutch mill

At the end of his tour of simuls Lasker wrote a long article in *De Telegraaf*, full of praise for the Netherlands and the Dutch. For a contemporary Dutchman it is hard to recognize the present state of his country in Lasker's description of pastoral bliss.

'Holland! The safe haven were the ship after an eventful voyage drops its anchor.' Thus Lasker starts his article, and he goes on to tell that he was overwhelmed by an indescribable sense of quiet when he first came to the Netherlands in 1908 from the United States. Trains and boats went quietly, mills, boatmen and peasants moved slowly, a welcome relief after the chaotic and hectic big cities of the world.

Dutch people were solid, Lasker found, as for centuries they had done battle against superior forces, thereby gaining a healthy distrust of everything artificial and superficial.

If Lasker was right, I think living in the Netherlands a century ago must have been slightly boring.

In line with his ideas about the Dutch national character was his characterization of Dutch chess players, who were damned with faint praise. But then, as Max Euwe had not yet made his mark, there was no objective reason for jubilation.

In 1924 Lasker was offered an honorary membership of Discendo Discimus. By the practice of giving honorary degrees or memberships to famous people, institutions are mostly honouring themselves, yet Lasker was glad about this distinction. Somehow it fell through, and only a regular membership of the club remained.

Not to compare myself with the great Lasker, but I was reminded of a similar occurrence in my own life. Because friends of mine were living in a small village in the north of Holland, I had combined my occasional visits to them with a yearly simul, without payment, at their chess club. These evenings were always enjoyable.

Alas, this came to an end after my friends had taken steps to make me an honorary member of

the club. The next time I visited the club, I was called into a room to discuss this with a few members of the board. They said that after ample consideration they had decided to bestow this honour on me, but at a condition: I had to promise to give a free simul every year.

I didn't quite understand. They had had this free simul for several years already. Would they think that I would stop doing that after being elevated to the rank of a honorary member? Take the honour and run? 'We are not giving away our honorary memberships for nothing' said one of the board members of the club shrewdly.

I wonder if something like that happened between Lasker and Discendo Discimus.

Whatever happened, Lasker's relations with the Netherlands remained good. In the years before he settled in Moscow, he was dividing his time between Holland and London. As Robert van de Velde relates in the chapter about Lasker and bridge, 1932 saw Lasker captain of the Dutch bridge team, assembled by himself, that was taking part in an important international competition in London.

Disappointed by Alekhine

In 1935 Lasker was present as a journalist at the match between Alekhine and Euwe. In BLB a letter to his wife Martha is reproduced in which Lasker could be more outspoken than in his newspaper reports.

He writes: 'I will not stay much longer here, because Alekhine is playing badly and such chess doesn't interest me. The very young players do it better. There are many young talents for whom chess as it is presented here, has nothing to say. The development of chess, in my opinion, will pass Alekhine and Euwe as if they didn't exist at all. I am quite irritated about this miserable, I mean partly unsolid and partly spiritless chess. But this I say only to you, as a public criticism by me would be superfluous. The young masters express their criticism much better than I could do it. Well, it is late, & I write in haste, ardent kiss, Emanuel.'

Strong words. Was he right in his condemnation of the match? I don't know. Praising the young is a common stratagem of the old to defuse the threat of the bothersome generation in-between.

Early in 1937 Lasker took part in a simul tour through the Netherlands, together with other world top players. Later that year, between Moscow and New York, he stayed there again for some time. Peter de Jong notes that till

his death Lasker stayed in contact with his Dutch friend Gerard Oskam, a lawyer and chess master who had taken Emanuel's sister Theophilia, a refugee like her brother, into his house.

During the German occupation of the Netherlands, Oskam was interned as a hostage, liable to be executed in reprisal for anti-German activities elsewhere in the country. This may have been because he was a friend of the Soviet Union, but maybe not, as hostages were taken from the ranks of prominent Dutch personalities of all political persuasions.

Theophilia was deported by the Germans and murdered in the Polish concentration camp Sobibor in 1943. Oskam survived the war and lived till 1952.

Hübner's labyrinths

Here and in my previous article about BLB I have shied away from giving a characterization of Lasker's style as a chess player. It is too difficult for me.

I would say that Robert Hübner does it in his chapter about Lasker's early chess career, were it not that he doesn't recognise the concept of 'style' as applied to chess players. If I understand Hübner correctly, his point of view is that chess players are trying to make the best move in any given situation. They differ as to the kind of positions in which they excel, and this may lead to the illusion of different styles.

Hübner has always had a healthy scorn for solemn banalities, but on this point I disagree with him.

His chapter, 162 pages long, is the technical backbone of the book. It is practically a book in itself, and in fact Hübner had already published a book (*Der Weltmeisterschaftskamp Lasker – Steinitz 1894 und weitere Zweikämpfe Laskers*) in 2008 which has much in common with his present presentation. I do not have that earlier book, but I think that the main difference is that there the match Lasker-Schlechter of 1910 is treated in great detail, whereas the present chapter stops in 1894.

Of course, Hübner analyses the games that particularly interest him in the way we are used to from him, with a labyrinth of variations. His way has often been criticized by the lazy, who complain that all these intricate variations go over their heads and that they would prefer a simple exposition of the general flow of the game.

I must confess that usually I belong to the lazy, though I am not complaining about the industrious. Only occasionally do I follow Hübner through his labyrinths. But the detours are always rewarding.

Even when you are too lazy to follow him, it is a comfortable idea that the task has been done and that the best possible approximation to truth has been accomplished.

And this holds especially when the career of a giant of chess such as Lasker is summed up. We want to know how good he really was and what really went on in his games. We want an authoritative voice to tell us, and we need the labyrinths of variations as a proof of seriousness, even when we are too lazy to check them.

Not surprisingly, Hübner has some harsh words for other commentators, and it is also no surprise that he doesn't exclude himself from criticism. When I read that even a contemporary annotator had been superficial in his comments, I was almost sure that Hübner was referring to himself, and indeed, when I looked at a note, this was confirmed.

There is a long chapter, more than 300 pages, with all serious games played by Lasker, many of them with annotations. The tournaments of Hastings 1895 and Zurich 1934 and the World Championship match against Tarrasch in 1908 are treated in separate chapters.

Vintage Viktor

And then there is a special contribution by Viktor Kortchnoi, who has often been compared to Lasker, because of his longevity as a chess player and also because of his concrete, unprejudiced style.

Kortchnoi analyses 'three games of an old master'.

Here is some vintage Viktor: he is annotating the game Euwe-Lasker, Zurich 1934, which started with the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♘bd7 5.e3 c6 6.♘f3 ♗e7. This last move by Lasker incurs his wrath. Kortchnoi explains that the move c7-c6 is only sensible in connection with ♕a5, the Cambridge Springs Variation, because otherwise Black should keep the option of playing c7-c5.

He writes: 'That was well-known to Lasker, the more so as he had played this position countless times in his life. Why then this move? Was he only absent-minded, or did he want to give the initiative to his opponent on purpose? Whatever, obviously Lasker wasn't sufficiently aware that his games for decades and decades would serve as an example to later generations. Therefore he holds a responsibility before millions of future chess lovers!'

Forsaking his duty to later generations, Lasker won the game nicely, but that does not invalidate Kortchnoi's point. Although he admires Lasker, he is not uncritical, and all in all this can be said about the whole of the BLB.

Emanuel Lasker. Denker, Weltenbürger, Schachweltmeister. Edited by Richard Forster, Stefan Hansen, Michael Negele. Exzelsior Verlag, Berlin 2009, €114.

HANS REE

ROWSON'S REVIEWS

You Are What You Click

It has been said that you are what you eat, but you are also what you read, what you listen to, and what you take in through your senses more generally. You are also, of course, what you think, and now that your identity is mediated by the technology you use, you are, increasingly, what you click.

It is hard to imagine chess before analysis engines, and even harder to imagine chess before the Internet, because while Rybka and her chums usurped our supremacy at the board, the Internet irrevocably changed the whole world. If you were lucky enough to play in international events before the mid-nineties, you would already have known that chess is a universal language, but it took the marriage of Mrs Telephone and Mr Computer to create a global family of chess players.

Now you can play blitz with somebody of comparable strength thousands of miles away with less effort than it takes to get to your local chess club. The Internet also allows us to follow games at our own pace, either glued to the screen watching the action unfold live, dipping in and out every hour or so, or simply downloading after the event, to replay the games in your own time.

We know all this, and now take it for granted. Indeed many have suggested that the Internet is 'the ideal medium' and that it is 'built for chess'. Others have even suggested that we shouldn't worry about chess not being on television very much, because television is a twilight medium at the end of its cycle, soon to be surpassed by increasingly user-friendly mobile devices with scaleable vector graphics that will become as universal as television is now. In this slightly dystopic vision, almost everybody has an iPad, or something similar, and they can watch their favourite 'television' programmes, kibitz on Linares and check their email, while listening to music simultaneously. Given that they can do all this whenever and wherever they like, the old box in the corner, or even the flat screen on the wall, begins to look a bit passé.

Moreover, in web-speak television is still a bit web 1.0, in which we are passive consumers of content, rather than web 2.0, in which we are more actively producing content, often collaboratively, or even web 3.0, the so-called 'Internet of things', in which we are plugged into the net from the cradle to the grave and all our transactions and interactions are recorded and fed back to us, like digital spiders submerged in a cyber web of our own making.

Or whatever. Clearly the future is not what it used to be, and in a chess context I think we should think a bit harder about whether the Internet will automatically help chess become the planetary spectator sport most of us feel it deserves to be. To give this issue some theoretical perspective, a supportive medium for chess would increase the 'social capital' of the chess community. Social capital is a fancy way to frame the folk wisdom that when it comes to the key determinants of success, 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' that matters.

Social capital is a concept I am condemned to use in my current day job at the RSA (Royal Society of Arts) in London, and although the concept is highly contested and sometimes even ridiculed, thinking about it has transformed my view of the world. The most succinct definition is from David Halpern who calls social capital 'the social networks, norms and sanctions that facilitate cooperative action among individuals and communities'. Social capital is, in short, about the quantity, quality and diversity of relationships available to an individual or group, and those relationships are a form of capital because you can *do* things with them. To break it down a bit, bonded social capital refers to the cohesion and trust within a group, bridging social capital refers to the connections with other groups that may have different kinds of resources, and linking social capital is about access to political power.

So how is the social capital of the chess world? My impression

is that we have a strongly bonded community, but it is not very well bridged or linked. In other words, we know each other well, but talk to each other too much, and are far too content to settle for whatever esteem we are afforded in this small world. Yet we quite rarely made credible links with other pursuits, or sustained efforts to engage people who do not share our love for the game or the algebraic arcana that conceals it. Moreover, with some notable exceptions in Russia and Armenia, in general we do not seem to be very well linked to sources of power. For these reasons I was very impressed by the organisation of the London Chess Classic, in which the organisers went out of their way to get beyond the perils of chess bonding, and made assiduous attempts to bridge to mainstream news and link to business and politics.

Coming back to the web, my concern is that while the Internet is undoubtedly a boon for chess lovers, and gives us incomparable opportunities to deepen and share our love for the game, unless we think more creatively, it may have minimal impact on our attempts to reach a wider audience. Television may be a twilight medium, but is also, to some extent, an involuntary medium, in the sense that when chess is on television, thousands of people stumble upon it and stay tuned, something they are highly unlikely to do online.

So the Internet is increasingly what you make it, and my point is that chess players should not be so busy enjoying the Internet benefits for existing players that they forget to shape it to attract new ones. I make this (admittedly quite elaborate) point now because I decided to review some chess websites for this column, but in doing so I was reminded that the idea of 'website' now seems, as the fashionistas might put it, SO twentieth century. More promising approaches to building bridging and linking capital for the chess world lie in better chess blogging, including reciprocal links to non chess sites, and developing a much deeper understanding of social media and web traffic, so that the chess audience begins to talk to people beyond its own ken.

In a chess context we should think a bit harder about whether the Internet will automatically help chess become the planetary spectator sport most of us feel it deserves to be.

User profiles

A few years ago, when I was playing more actively, I used to play 3-minute chess on ICC quite regularly, read Chess Today as a daily pdf, download TWIC regularly, read most articles at ChessCafe.com and would scour chesspublishing.com for theoretical bombshells. These are all, of course, highly popular and recommended sources, all of which I still use when the inclination arises. However, in the last year or two, my 'user profile' has changed from a professional player seeking ideas to apply in practice to something more like 'expert amateur' seeking perspectives on the chess world for talks and fresh ideas for a chess newspaper column that I write for non chess players every Saturday in *The Herald* in Scotland (this is not online yet, so if you would like to see it, email the online editor at david.milne@heraldandtimes.co.uk). So my bond with chess is secure, but now, unless my clock is ticking, I am more interested in building bridges and links to other worlds, than figuring out why 34.♖h2!!! is such an important move.

In this respect, my user profile has become more mainstream. Like thousands of chess fans, work and family life has given me less time for chess and I seek my 'fix' of meaning, my take-away point, more quickly. Moreover, when I surf chess sites, I want ideas I can share with friends and colleagues who still need some persuading that chess is the solution to the problems of mankind. So where do I look?

Well I think there is a good reason why ***ChessBase.com*** attracts so many viewers and comments, and it keeps me coming back for the same reasons. The online editor, Frederic Friedel, has clearly given some thought to the behaviour of Internet users, realizes that most of his audience are chess enthusiasts rather than professional players, and tailors his news items accordingly. Most people want to see new content at least once a day, but they do not want to read large chunks of text, nor do they have the stomach for extended pieces of analysis. It is not even clear if most people feel they have time to watch videos on a regular basis. ChessBase.com therefore presents enough introductory text to get you 'hooked', but to hold you on site before you click away, they give you lots of quality photographs, most without direct connections to chess, and

a few game fragments that offer chunks of effortless meaning in a way that a whole game usually doesn't. They also offer the basic results and schedule of tournaments, and quite a few fairly meaningless statistics, especially rating performances after a handful of games, that serve as units of meaning, even if they don't mean very much at all.

ChessBase is also good at bridg-

chessbase.com

ing to other domains, with regular features about chess as a social good and product of cultural evolution, often based on recent research, but sometimes just based on endearing flights of fancy. For instance, a few days ago, their April fool set-up was particularly inspired because they gave three fairly implausible stories; about top chess players suddenly showing a keen interest in a physics experiment that may lead to the end of the world, the possibility of Fischer's body being exhumed, and Carlsen being the second cousin of Matt Damon. Two of the stories, though based in fact, were heavily embellished, while one was completely fabricated. The following day it was revealed that Carlsen is not related to Matt Damon, though a source close to the Norwegian government speculated that they may soon appear together in an advert for orange juice. You heard it here first.

Presumably Frederic also knows that most of his readers are male, because he seems rather fond of selecting pictures of the fairer sex, with only marginal relevance to the stories at hand. Moreover, the captions to some of these pictures, though by no means criminal, sometimes veer on the uncomfortable side of acceptability.

Still, when you go to ChessBase.com you know you will get relevant information on top events on a regular basis and enough chess to chew over with interest, but you will also get some variety, some human interest, and some awareness of the world outside the sixty-four squares. Moreover, I personally go to ChessBase.com because I can sense that the webmaster is enjoying himself. Frederic posts with a mischievous avuncular quality that stems from having known most of the best

chessvibes.com

players before they were teenagers, and he conveys an ongoing respect for the intense taste of chess, as part of an appetite for the wider world.

After ChessBase.com, and sometimes before, I tend to go to *ChessVibes.com* which appears to be maturing into a site with a distinctive European personality. The website/weblog began a few years ago and is run out of the Netherlands, mainly by Peter Doggers and Arne Moll, but including contributions from numerous other authors. It began with an emphasis on quality video content with music, scenery, interviews etc, but the site has rounded itself to include a regularly updated blog, and their Chess Tempo game viewer allows you to easily play through a game with annotations from almost any computer. Moreover, they often do the hard work of selecting the most interesting games for you, rather than obliging you to download a pgn file, which, in my experience, is precisely the kind of extra steps that make people look elsewhere, partly because it takes time, but also because it wakes up the technical gremlins, who are always waiting for their chance to ruin your day.

ChessVibes is tangibly interactive, and you feel that the site now has its own community, which is mostly positive and friendly, but suitably firm about deleting intemperate content and telling persistent trolls to go forth and copulate.

Another highlight is the regular posts of Arne Moll who was described in one comment as ChessVibes's answer to Malcolm Gladwell. Arne's creative contributions are valuable not in spite of but because of the fact that he is not a grandmaster. He is the chess

chessninja/dailydirt.com

equivalent of 'the intelligent layman' that many books are written for. He speaks with authority about what it is like to see chess at his level, which I think is just under 2200, and though he is generous in spirit, he is confident enough in his own judgment to be constructively critical at times. For instance, he recently went against the grain of mostly positive reviews of a New In Chess publication in a detailed review

chessville.com

chesscafe.com

beginning with the following intriguing remark: 'Here's a confession: I've had Viktor Moskalenko's latest book *Revolutionize Your Chess* in my possession for weeks already, but I've been reluctant to review it. The reason, quite simply, is this: I don't like it at all.'

In addition to detailed reviews, Arne also pens more adventurous pieces, for instance 'Time Travel in Chess' and 'What Baby Names can tell you about Chess Openings'. They say a blogger is always looking over his shoulder for fear that he is not being followed, but this doesn't apply here. ChessVibes already has a lot of loyal fans, and Arne's posts in particular get plenty of positive feedback.

If there is nothing new at ChessBase or ChessVibes, I tend to go to ***The Daily Dirt***, if only because Mig Greengard is always an engaging and amusing scribe, and unfailingly manages to write about chess in a way that makes you feel you are watching live football. For instance, the snippet below recently made me laugh, perhaps because there is something slightly amusing about Norwegians in general: 'Carlsen was just named Norway's sports star of the year, which caused a little controversy due to the usual "is chess really a sport?" argument from some quarters. But he finished ahead of Thor Hushovd, Suzann Pettersen, and Brede Hangeland, and of course we all know how big they are. I mean, just saying Hushovd says it all, I think. Hushovd.'

There are many more worthy sites and blogs, and I apologise to those I haven't had space to mention here (for instance, Elizabeth Vicary's Blog has a certain charm and Chessville.com has plenty of good stuff), but I have to sign off. Of course, if you don't agree with the above, or feel you have something to say, there is no lack of online space available. You too could have your 15 megabytes of fame.

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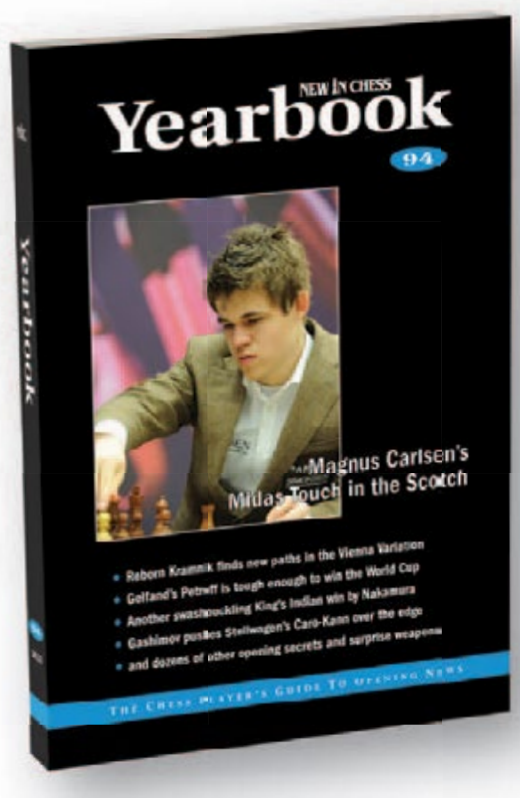
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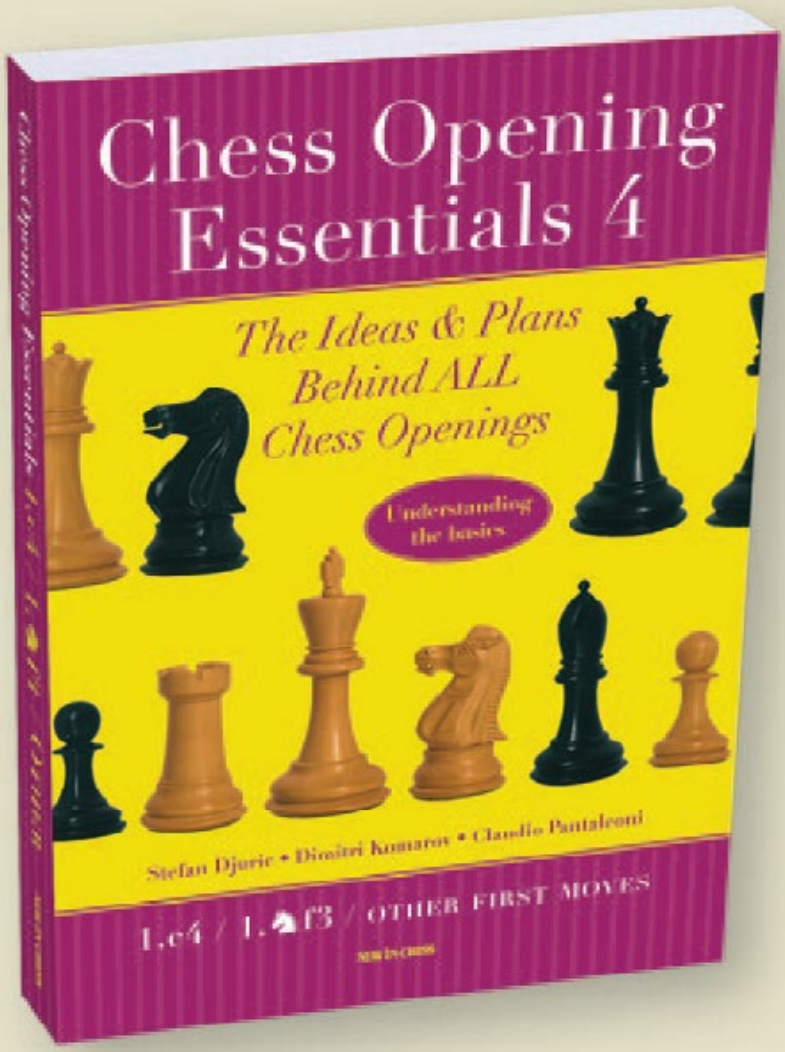
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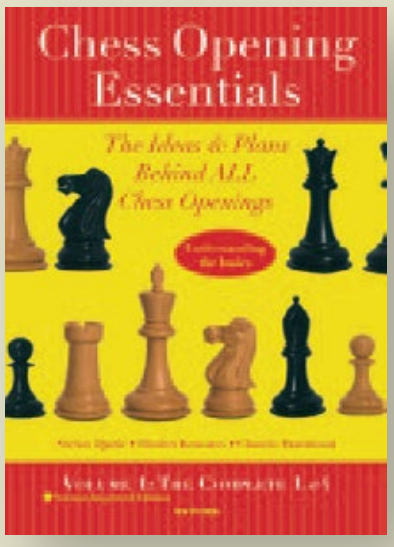

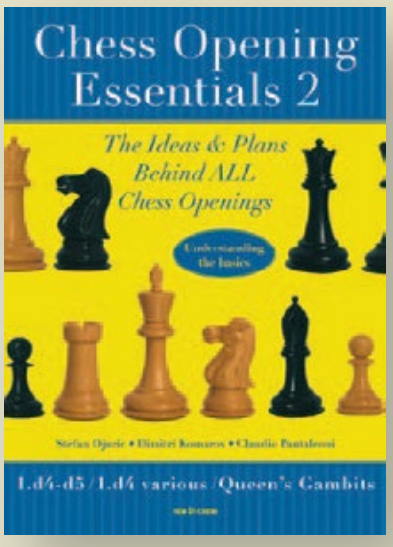

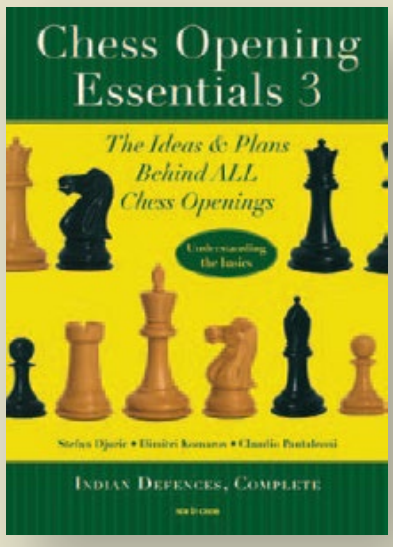

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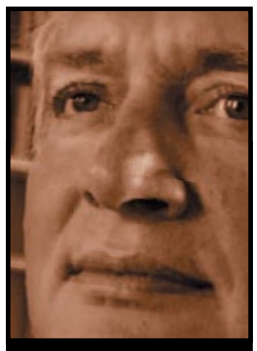


JAN TIMMAN

Vasily Smyslov: Refinement and Accuracy

Vasily Smyslov is the only player in the history of chess who won two consecutive Candidates' tournaments, absolutely dominating them: Zurich 1953 and Amsterdam 1956. Both times, it gave him the right to challenge Botvinnik. In 1954 the match ended in a draw; in 1957 Smyslov won by a three-point margin.

Based on these results, the general view is that from 1953 to 1958, Smyslov was the best player in the world. Yet he lacks the status and fame of other World Champions. Many people say this is because Smyslov was World Champion for only one year. I can't accept this as a sound argument in itself. Tal's reign as World Champion also lasted just one year, yet he enjoys enormous fame. It is probably more to do with the fact that refinement and accuracy stir the imagination less than show and elan – in the same way that Max Ernst was a far less famous artist than Picasso.

A striking detail is that Smyslov's breakthrough came relatively late. Bronstein, for example, was three years younger than him, but he had already played a world championship match against Botvinnik. Prior to the Zurich tournament, Smyslov wasn't even one of the favourites, yet his eventual victory was even more convincing than Petrosian's in Curaçao 1962. He won nine of his 28 games, and like Petrosian he could have remained unbeaten, but for a blackout against Kotov.

After that Smyslov had to get used to the extraordinary tensions generated by a world championship match. At one point he trailed Botvinnik 4½–½, and what he achieved against the World Champion in the 39 match games that followed was just phenomenal: he scored +7.

Botvinnik's revenge matches against Smyslov and Tal have a bad name, because it is said that Botvinnik had profited from the fact that they were played in a time that his opponents were sick.

As a rule, it is difficult for a World Champion to play such a match against the man he has defeated only shortly before. Kasparov is the only one that survived the ordeal, against Karpov in 1986. And I think that in Smyslov's case there was another factor: he had played so well against Botvinnik that his approach was a bit too casual.

Botvinnik and Smyslov: my absolute chess heroes when I was young. In some respects they were each other's opposites: Botvinnik normally sat glued to the board in deep concentration, whereas Smyslov ambled around when his opponent was thinking. In his obituary in *The Guardian*, Leonard Barden wrote: 'He had an individual technique too, when moving a piece, grasping it midway down its stem rather than near the top as most players do, then placing it on its new square with a slight screwing action.'

This is a striking description. I had already noticed this technique when I played Smyslov for the first time in Hastings 1969/70. The pieces used were as old as the tradition itself: dusty, big and heavy.

Smyslov's late breakthrough is slightly puzzling. He was taught to play at a very young age by his father, himself a strong player who had beaten Alekhine in 1908. According to *My Great Predecessors* Volume I, Dufresne's text-book had even been Smyslov's first chess book. Smyslov himself says something else in his preface to *Ausgewählte Schachpartien* : 'I still have A.A.Alekhine's book *My Best Games*, which my father gave to me in 1928 and which became my constant reference.'

That was a brand-new book in those days. Alekhine's influence on Smyslov's game is unmistakable.

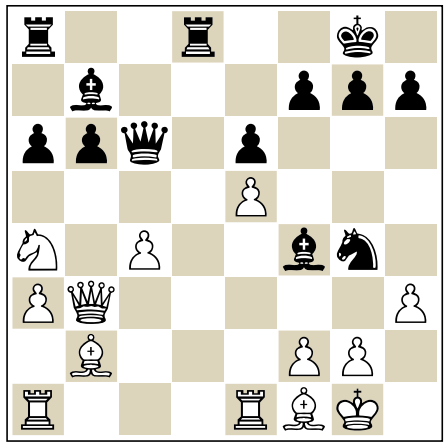
Robert Hübner once said that Smyslov was first and foremost a dangerous attacking player. This opinion can be corroborated by a great many games.

Ausgewählte Partien appeared in 1954. After Euwe's and Botvinnik's game collections, this was the first chess book I studied. The book opened with the following game:

QP 6.3 – D05
Gerasimov
Vasily Smyslov
Moscow 1935

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 e6 4.♗d3 c5 5.b3 ♘c6 6.♗b2 ♗d6 7.0-0 ♕c7 8.a3 b6 9.c4 ♗b7 10.♘c3 a6 11.♖e1 cxd4 12.exd4 0-0 13.

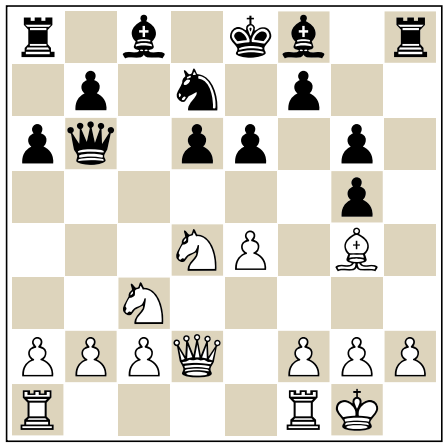
♘a4 ♗f4 14.♘e5 dxc4 15.bxc4 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♕c6 17.♗f1 ♖fd8 18.♕b3 ♘g4 19.h3



And now Black decided the game with **19...♖d3! 20.♕xb6 ♖xh3! 21.♗d4 ♗h2+ 22.♔h1 ♗xe5+** White resigned.
It is a variation on the famous combination from Rotlewi-Rubinstein, Lodz 1907. As a 14-year-old, Smyslov must have known this game.

Even at an advanced age, Smyslov was an attacker to be reckoned with. The last tournament I played together with him was the third Sigeman tournament in Malmö in 1997. We were staying in the stately Savoy hotel opposite the Central Station. Smyslov's eyes had already deteriorated a good deal. One afternoon I met him in the hotel in the company of his wife. Only when she had told him who I was did he cordially greet me. He could see the contours of my face but hadn't recognized me.

The contours of the chess pieces were less of a problem, and he remained unbeaten in the tournament. In Round 5 he got the position at the top of the next column. Sokolov had gone for the Sicilian, a sign that he wanted to win; which is not entirely incomprehensible when you're facing a 76-year-old. Sokolov was walking around visibly unconcerned. I stopped him and said: 'You know, Smyslov is going to sacrifice his bishop on e6. And what's more, he is going to do it quickly.'



Smyslov-Sokolov
Malmö 1997
position after 12...hxg5

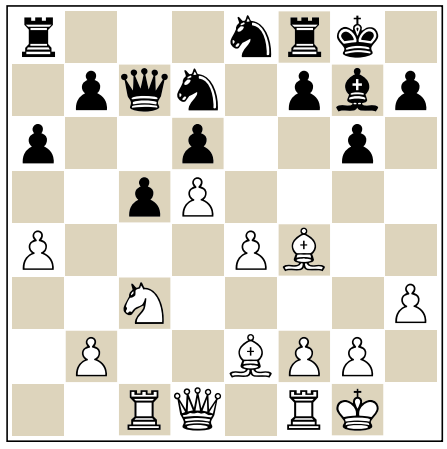
Barely a minute later, Sokolov hurried back to the board. The old man had captured on e6.
After **13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♘xe6 ♖b8 15.♘d5 ♕xb2 16.♕xg5** White had a winning advantage.
Later Smyslov's win became even clearer, but tiredness caused him to let it slip. In a position that was still better for him he eventually agreed to a draw.

In 2005, Vladimir Kramnik said about Smyslov in an interview: 'He was a master of positional play and surpassed his predecessors in this area.'

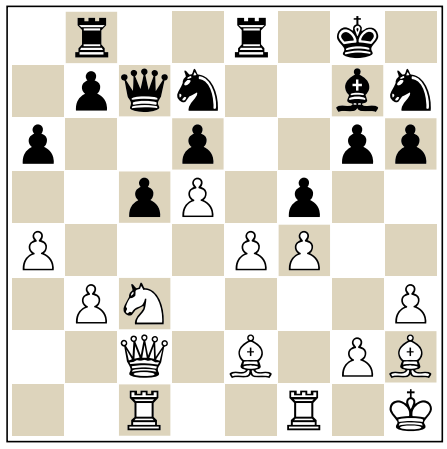
This is correct. Euwe and Botvinnik were excellent positional players, but Smyslov was just that little bit better. In the 1950s he played a number of positional masterpieces culminating in irresistible attacks. Two examples:

BI 15.4 – A73
Vasily Smyslov
Miroslav Filip
Vienna 1957

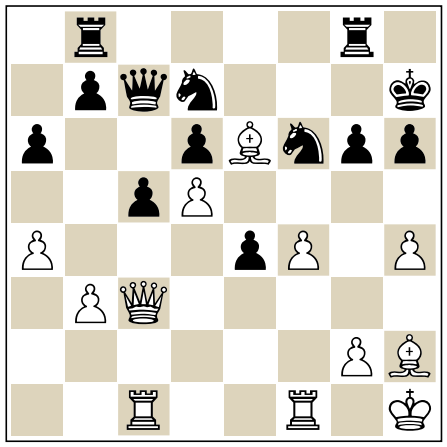
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 a6 12.♗f4
A strong move. White is threatening 13.e5, preventing Black from playing the thematic 12...b5.
12...♘e8 Slightly passive. Better was 12...♕e7.
13.a4 ♘d7 14.♗e2 ♕c7 15.♖c1
Solid positional play. White wants to take control of the queenside and aims to prevent the further advance of the black c-pawn.



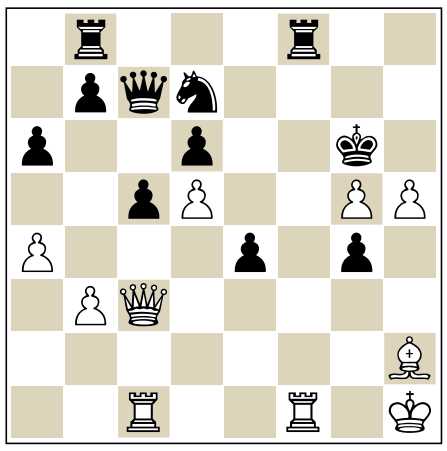
15...♖b8 16.b3 ♘ef6 17.♕c2 ♖fe8 18.♗h2 h6
The start of a dubious plan. Better, it seems, was 18...♖e7 in order to double rooks on the e-file.
19.♔h1 ♘h7 20.f4 f5



This was the plan. The consequences of 21.exf5 ♗xc3 are not entirely clear here. Smyslov finds a better plan.
21.♗f3!
An impressive pawn sacrifice.
21...♗xc3 22.♕xc3 fxe4 23.♗g4
The point. White will take the bishop to e6 and launch an attack.
23...♘hf6 24.♗e6+ ♔h7 25.h4!
In preparation of the advance f4-f5. After the immediate 25.f5 Black would play 25...g5, after which the kingside would remain closed.
25...♖g8
Filip defends as best he can. He is prepared to sacrifice an exchange in order to at least be able to meet 26.f5 with 26...g5.

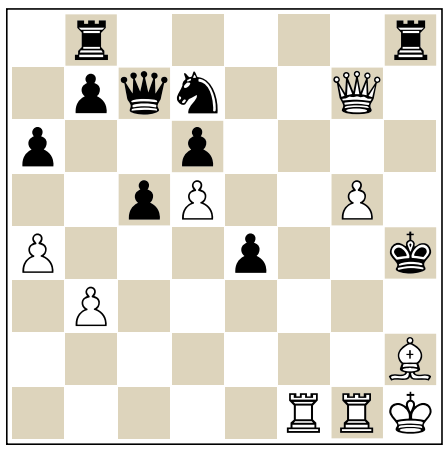


26.g4!
Smyslov continues his sweeping attack.
26...h5 27.g5 ♘g4 28.f5 ♖gf8 29. fxg6+ ♔xg6 30.♗xg4 hxg4 31. h5+!



It is great to see the white king-side pawns rolling forward. The black king is forced to go to the fifth rank.
31...♔xh5 32.♕g7

And now the way back has been cut off.
32...g3 33.♗xg3 ♔g4 34.♖g1 ♖h8+ 35.♗h2+ ♔h4 36.♖cf1

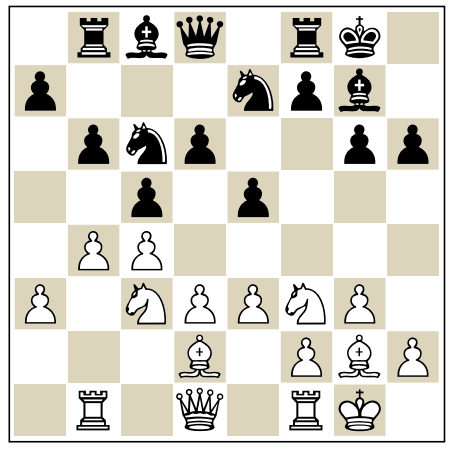


Closing the mating net. **36...♖bg8 37.♖f4+** With 37.♕f7 the mate would have been one move quicker, but the text was obviously good enough to force resignation.
37...♔h5 38.♕f7+ ♖g6 39.♕f5
Black resigned.

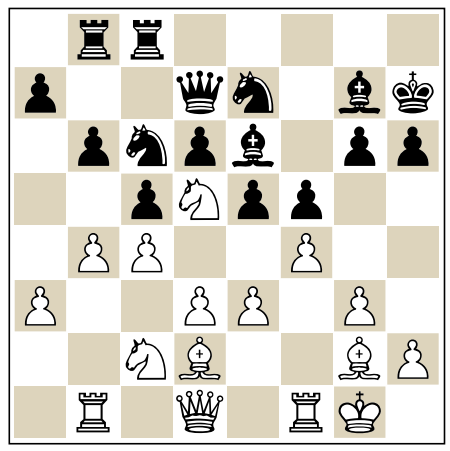
Sometimes Smyslov liked to start with a quiet flank game.

EO 28.11 – A30
Vasily Smyslov
Milko Bobotsov
Munich Olympiad 1958

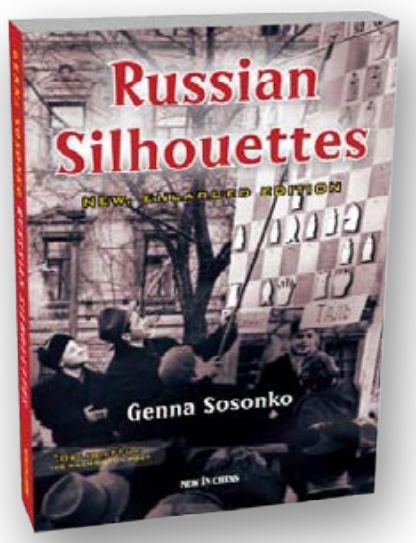
1.c4 c5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.0-0 e5 6.♘c3 ♘ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.a3 d6 9.♖b1 b6 10.b4 ♖b8 11.e3 h6 12.♗d2



A calm developing move. For the moment, White takes up a modest position, relying on a later stage of the middlegame to offer him prospects.
12...♗e6 13.♘e1 ♕d7 14.♘d5 ♔h7 15.f4 f5 16.♘c2 ♖fc8



17.b5! A strong move. Before starting action in the centre, White creates room on the queenside.



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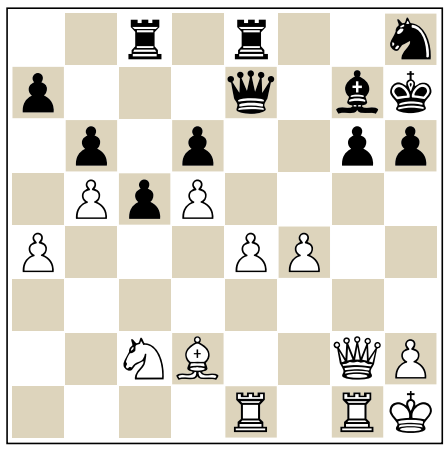
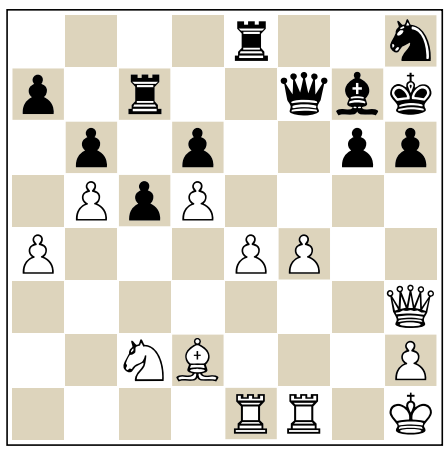
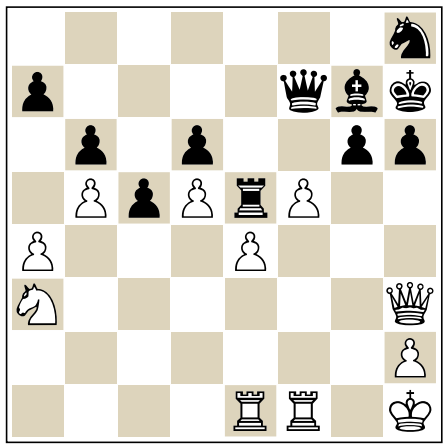
17...♘d8 18.e4 fxe4 19.dxe4 exf4 20.gxf4 ♘xd5 21.cxd5 ♗h3
Black wants to simplify further. 21...♗g4 would have been stronger.
22.♕f3 ♗xg2 23.♕xg2 ♘f7 24.♔h1 ♖e8 25.♖g1 ♘h8 26.a4
Strategy and attacking play go hand in hand. White is going to take the knight to c4.
26...♕e7 27.♖be1 ♖bc8 Intending to meet 28.♘a3 with 28...c4.



28.♕h3
White slowly increases the pressure. The computer prefers 28. f5 here, but Smyslov probably thought that the forced continuation 28...g5 29.h4 ♘f7 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♗xg5 ♘xg5 32.♕xg5 ♕xg5 33.♖xg5 ♗h6 would leave him just short of the advantage needed for a win.
28...♕f7 29.♖gf1 ♖c7



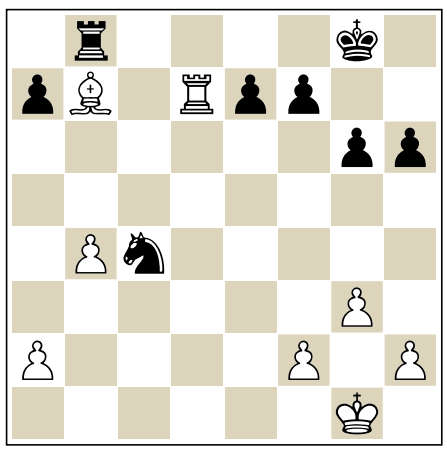
30.f5! Now this advance is extremely strong.
30...♖e5
Black's best defence was 30...♕e7. Bobotsov tries to ease the pressure with an exchange sacrifice, but this turns out to be insufficient.
31.♗f4 ♖ce7 32.♗xe5 ♖xe5 33.♘a3
From here on in, the game is playing itself. The smoothness of White's play delights the eye.



33...♖e7 34.♘c4 ♗e5 35.fxg6+ ♕xg6 36.♖g1 ♕e8 37.♘e3 ♖f7 38.♘f5 ♗f4 39.♕g4
Black resigned. Smyslov was a past master in winning games in which his opponents had not made any noticeable errors.

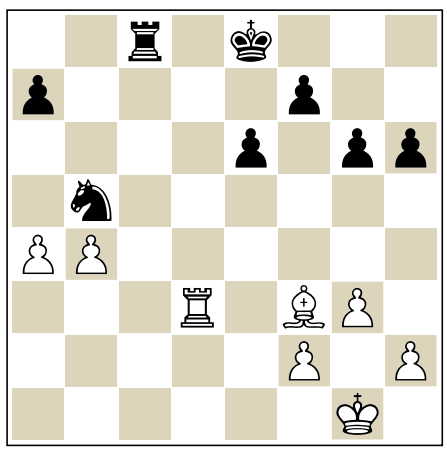
Smyslov's endgame technique was universally praised. There are numberless examples in which his endgame virtuosity comes to the fore.

I have selected three game fragments from the early 1960s in which he wins out of the defence. Each time he has a seemingly passive knight against a seemingly strong bishop. In all three games his opponents push a bit too hard, after which Smyslov strikes mercilessly.

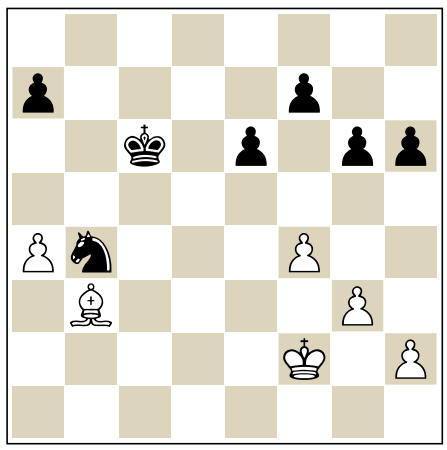


Portisch-Smyslov
Moscow 1961
position after 26.♖d7

White is slightly more active, but a draw seems the most likely outcome.
26...♔f8 27.♖c7
Now White's last bit of advantage disappears. Stronger was 27.b5.
27...♘d6 28.♗d5 e6 29.♗f3 ♘b5 30.♖c4 ♘d6 31.♖c6 ♘f5 32.♖c4 ♘d6 33.♖c7 ♘b5
It is clear that Black would be happy with a draw.
34.♖d7 Portisch wants to win.
34...♔e8 35.♖d3
Better was 35.♗b5, after which Black forces a drawn rook ending with 35...♖b6. Now Black takes the initiative.
35...♖c8 36.a4



36...♖c3!
Strong play. After the rook swap the black king beats its white colleague to the scene of the battle.
37.♗e2 ♖xd3 38.♗xd3 ♘c3 39.♗c2 39.a5 would have been slightly better.
39...♔d7 40.♗b3 ♔c6 41.f4 ♘d5 42.♔f2 ♘xb4



Black has won a pawn. The rest could be safely left to Smyslov's technique.

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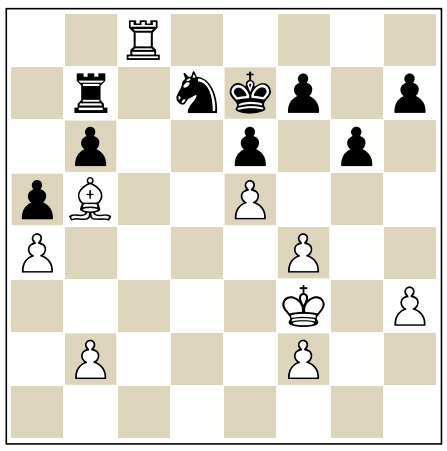
Vasily Smyslov engaged in conversation with Vladimir Bagirov, Evgeny Vasiukov, Mark Taimanov and Alexander Nikitin.

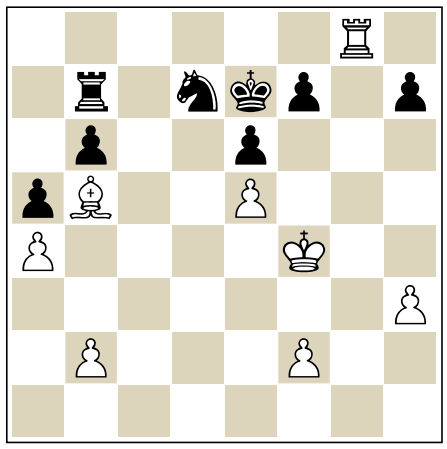
43.♔e3 ♔c5 44.♔e4 ♘c6 45.h4 h5 46.f5 exf5+ 47.♔f4 f6 48.♗f7 ♘e5 49.♗e8 a5 50.♔e3 ♔d5 51.♔f4 ♔e6 52.♔e3 ♔e7 53.♗b5 g5 54.♔d4 g4 55.♔e3 ♘g6 56.♗d3 f4+ 57.gxf4 ♘xh4 58.♔f2 ♔f7 59.♔g3 ♘f3
White resigned.



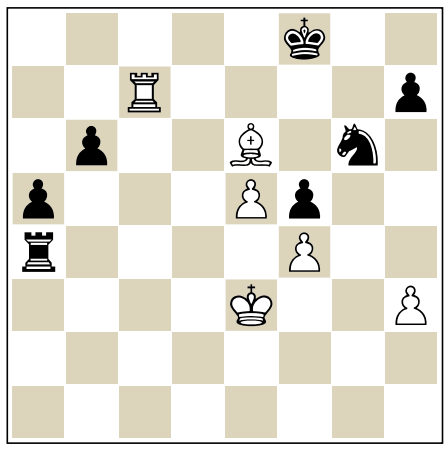
Taimanov-Smyslov
Moscow 1961
position after 35.e5

Roughly the same picture as in the previous fragment, except that White has an undeniable advantage here. Smyslov takes emergency measures.

35...g5 36.♖g8?
Taimanov was undoubtedly in time-trouble here. With 36.fxg5 ♘xe5+ 37.♔g3 f6 38.f4 he could have retained his advantage.
36...gxf4 37.♔xf4

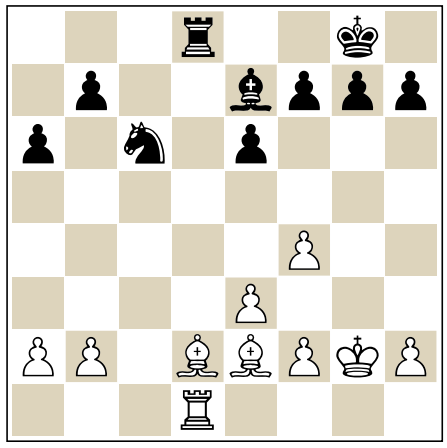


37...♘f8!
Now Black is fine. The white rook has been sidelined and will have to be redeployed.
38.♔e4 ♖c7 39.♖g3 ♖c2 40.f4
The last move in time-trouble, and a serious error. White should have aimed for a draw with 40.♖c3.
40...♖xb2 41.♖c3 ♖b4+ 42.♔e3 ♘g6
Black has won a pawn, and now the game becomes a matter of technique.
43.♖c8 f5 44.♖c7+ ♔f8 45.♗c4 ♖xa4 46.♗xe6



46...♖e4+! An important intermediate check. Black is winning.
47.♔d2 ♘xf4 48.♗xf5 ♖e2+ 49.♔c3 ♘d5+ 50.♔d3 ♖xe5 51.♖c8+ ♔g7 52.♗e4 ♘f4+ 53.♔d4 ♖e7 54.♖b8 ♘e2+ 55.♔d3 ♘c1+ 56.♔d4 ♘e2+ 57.♔d3 ♘c1+ 58.♔d4 ♘b3+ 59.♔d5 ♘c5 60.♗b1 ♘d7 61.♖d8 ♘f6+ 62.♔c6 ♖e6+ 63.♔b7 b5 64.♖a8 a4 65.♖a5 ♘d5 66.♖xb5 ♘c3 67.♖g5+ ♔h6 68.♖g1 a3 69.♗d3 ♖e3 70.♗c4

♖e4 71.♗g8 ♖e7+ 72.♔b6 ♖g7 73.♖c1 ♖xg8 74.♖xc3 ♖a8
White resigned.



Gligoric-Smyslov
position after 27.♔g2
Hastings 1962/63

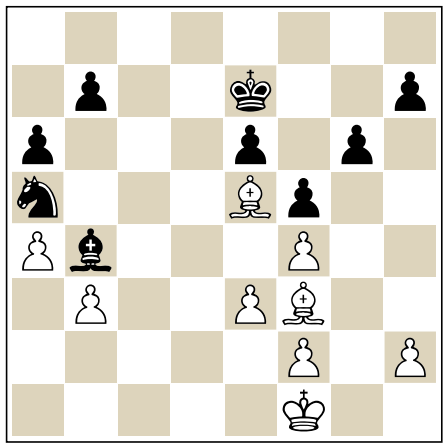
White has the bishop pair, but it isn't much of an advantage, especially in view of his weakened kingside.

27...f5
A good strategic move. Black fixes the white weakness.

28.a3 ♗f6 29.b3 ♗b2 30.a4 ♔f7 31.♔f1 ♗a3
Excellent manoeuvring. The bishop is on its way to b4.

32.♗c3 ♖xd1+ 33.♗xd1 ♗b4 34.♗b2 g6 35.♗f3 ♘a5 36.♗e5
Gligoric is clearly still harbouring winning ambitions.

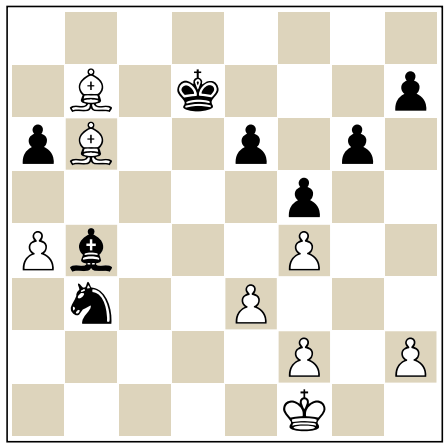
36...♔e7



37.♗c7? But now he goes too far.

37...♘xb3 38.♗xb7 ♔d7!
This is the problem. After 38...♘c5 39.♗c6 everything would have been fine.

39.♗b6



39...♗c5!
The magnificent point of the previous move. White has to accept the bishop swap, after which he will lose his a-pawn. The bishop pair has come to an inglorious end.

Smyslov as an endgame composer

It is a striking fact that Smyslov started composing studies at a very young age. This craft lay dormant during the time of his great successes. It was only at an advanced

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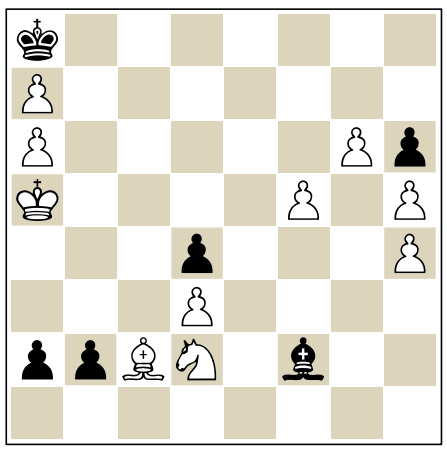
age, when blindness stopped him playing practical games, that he picked it up again. For 60 years he had produced very little in the area of endgame studies.

There is a great twin study from 1976 that features a pair of light-squared bishops. These studies can be found in New In Chess 1991/5 and in *New In Chess – The First 25 Years*. The article also contains a study from 1987 that had been completely anticipated by Gorgiev 52 years earlier. It goes without saying that Smyslov didn't know this.

In 2001 a little stamp-sized booklet called *Moi Etiudy* was published. It contains 57 studies, 48 of which are from after 1998. I got the booklet, autographed by Smyslov himself, via Genna Sosonko. 'To dear Jan Timman,' said the inscription. I was struck by the steadiness of his handwriting; it had not been affected by his blindness. In 2005 a second edition appeared, containing a total of 114 studies. This means that in four years he had made exactly another 57 studies.

Curiously, *Moi Etiudy* does not contain the first study that Smyslov had made back in 1936, a year after his game against Gerasimov. That study looks as follows:



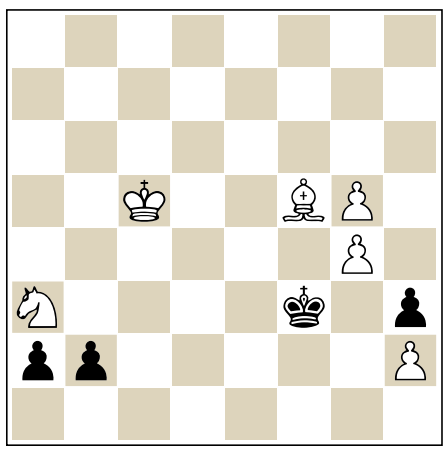
Smyslov 1936
White to play and win

It goes as follows:
1.♗b1! a1♕+ 2.♔b5 ♗g3 3.g7 ♗b8(!) 4.g8♗!! ♗f4 5.♗ga2 ♗xd2 6.f6 ♗f4 7.f7 ♗d6 8.♔c6 ♗f8 9.♔c7
And wins.

It's a great study, but it does have a few snags – which is understandable if you consider that Smyslov was only 15. The end is not very accurate, and the pawns on the h-file make the study uneconomical. Smyslov and Pervakov, who edited the booklet, may have decided to leave it out.

It does contain a variety of follow-up studies on the same theme: a black queened pawn surrounded by white minor pieces, followed by a minor promotion for White.

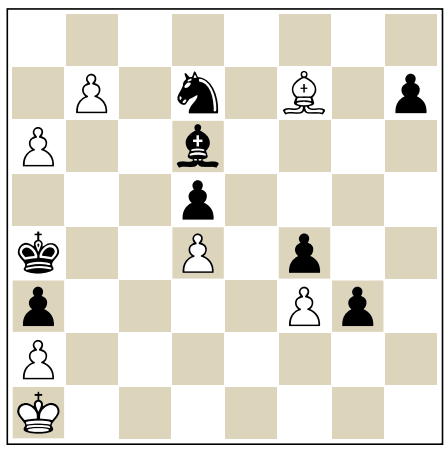
All those studies are more economical than the original one, but I find them less impressive. An example:



Smyslov 1999
White to play and win

The solution goes as follows:
1.♗b1 a1♕ 2.♔b4 ♔f4 3.g6 ♔g5 4.g7 ♔h6 5.g8♗!
Here, too, meant to prevent a stalemate.
5...♔g5 6.♗ga2
And now the picture is complete.
6...♔xg4 7.♔c3 ♔f3 8.♔d2 ♔g2 9.♔e2 ♔xh2 10.♔f2 ♔h1 11.♘b5
And wins. But not 11.♘c2 in view of 11...♕xb1! 12.♗xb1 h2, and stalemate is inevitable.

Last year I started working on a variation on Smyslov's original study with the intention of making it economical, adding some elements and creating an interesting ending. This is how it looks:



Timman 2010 (after Smyslov)
White to play and draw

The first few moves are obvious.
1.a7 ♗b8 2.a8♕+ ♔b4
White seems to have run out of options, since 3.♕a6 is met by 3...g2.
3.♗g6!
An improbable move. Now 3...hxg6 can be met effectively by 4.♕a6 after all, since the white queen can go to either g6 or f1 now.
3...g2 4.♗b1 g1♗!
The well-known motif.
5.♗f5 ♗xd4+ 6.♔b1 ♗da7 7.♗xd7 ♔c3
The situation is critical for White. He must be careful not to be outtempoed, e.g. 8.♗f5? h5 9.♔c1 h4 10.♔d1 d4, and this is a situation of mutual zugzwang.
8.♔c1 h5 9.♗b5!
The only bishop move to take control of the situation.
9...h4 10.♗f1 d4 11.♔d1
And another situation of mutual zugzwang has arisen. White to move would lose, Black to move cannot make progress, since after 11...d3 12.♗h3 d2 13.♗f1 he would even lose.

It had been my intention to show this study to Smyslov, but I never had time to do it. This is why I publish it now as a posthumous tribute.

GARRY KASPAROV

A Giant among Giants

The chess world has lost a giant with the passing of Vasily Smyslov. To say that he was world champion is enough to mark his place in history. We should elaborate, however, if only to provide compensation for his famously brief possession of the crown.

First is to remember he was number one in the mid-1950s, an unsurpassed era of giants. His victories in two consecutive Candidates' tournaments cannot be presented as a mere statistic when you look at the other participants. Keres, Bronstein, Petrosian, Reshevsky, Geller... Over 46 games – 28 at Zurich 1953 and 18 at Amsterdam in 1956 – Smyslov had fifteen wins and just two losses.

Next we must admit that Smyslov's clear, manoeuvring play suffers in the public imagination next to the dazzling sacrifices of Alekhine or Tal. This led to the underestimation of his powers as the decades wore on. At his peak, Smyslov's technique was far enough beyond that of his most of his peers that many of his victories have an effortless appearance. Observe the subtle exchanges and elegant queen manoeuvres against Reshevsky in the 1948 World Championship tournament. Or the phenomenal zugzwang play in the endgame against Botvinnik in the 17th game of their second match. The chessplayer/singer Smyslov could hear music in the game, his beloved harmony, that no one else could hear.

This apparent simplicity is of course deceptive – you do not dethrone Botvinnik with simple chess. Smyslov was himself unwilling to explain his superiority beyond his amusing and humble maxim, 'I will make forty good moves and if you are able to do the same the game will be a draw.' Not the motto of a man burning with ambition, but few could keep pace with Botvinnik's iron work ethic.

As Smyslov continued to excel well into his sixth decade, his longevity took on a fame of its own. This had the paradoxical effect of partially obscuring his merits, as his performances were nearly always qualified with references to his advancing age. At 63, Smyslov reached the Candidates' final against me in 1984 by crushing Ribli, 30 years his junior, back in the days when Candidates' matches often lasted longer than today's world championships.

It would be disingenuous to say that facing Smyslov in 1984 worried me after I had come through matches against Beliavsky and Kortchnoi. It was quite another matter in 1975, when I first faced him. It was in a clock simul at one of the traditional Pioneer team events. The array of GMs was remarkable that year, with Karpov, Kortchnoi, and Polugaevsky, among others, facing teams of top Soviet juniors.

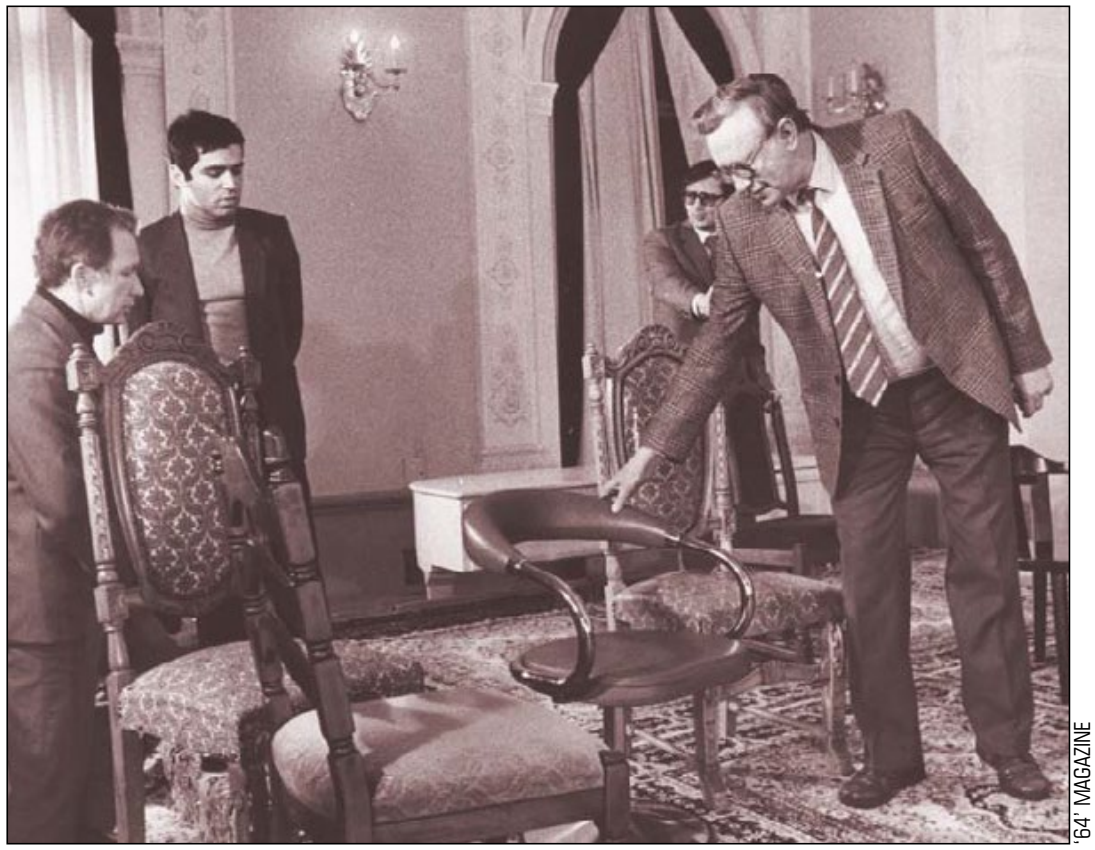
I gained a fine position and an extra pawn, but Smyslov organized a counterattack with the bishop pair, and after one mistake my position collapsed. I was very upset, especially when he went on to sweep our Baku team 7-0. Smyslov finished with the best score among the GMs, an excellent 38/42. In our game he played 3...g6 in the Ruy Lopez. It was a line he would then proceed to play regularly, reflecting his career-long experimentation in his favourite Spanish Defence. Smyslov contributed to nearly every variation and added no fewer than three new ideas in the standard position 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3. He tried 9...♘d7 10.d4 ♗f6, 9...♕d7?! (belying his reputation for orthodoxy) and 9..h6!? which still bears his name.

Smyslov's ability to play by feel, to immediately sense the right squares for the pieces, places him in the lineage of Capablanca, Karpov, and now Carlsen. It is no wonder his play seemed ageless. Consider his remarkable wins over Ivanchuk. The first, a model game in Smyslov's final Soviet championship in 1988, almost 50 years since his first attempt at the title. And another fine win, in rapid chess no less, at Tilburg, 1994! By then the veteran was nearly playing literally by feel due to the deterioration of his eyesight. Yet Smyslov always saw as much, and

as clearly, as any denizen of chess Olympus.

The era of living legends battling for the highest title may be over, but there is still a world title match to look forward to this month. Unlike the last two world championship matches, this year there are reasonable doubts as to whether we are seeing the best players in the world. If you compare Anand's and Topalov's past year of results to those of Carlsen and Kramnik, you might wonder if the wrong players are facing off in Sofia.

Regardless, the match should be an interesting one. Both players have advantages. Anand is generally the better player and if he plays with the same determination and inspiration he showed against Kramnik, he is the big favourite. Comparing the quality of that match to Topalov's against Kamsky leaves no doubts. But Topalov possesses unmatched fighting qualities and is always capable of coming from behind. If the match stays close and nerves become a factor, Anand might blink and the advantage could shift to the Bulgarian.



'64' MAGAZINE

Twelve chairs. On the eve of their Candidates' Final match in 1984, Vasily Smyslov and Garry Kasparov are looking for a chair that appears comfortable.

The theoretical aspect is also intriguing. I am not expecting great drama from the openings and will be pleasantly surprised to see any very sharp novelties. Both players have reasons to avoid an opening duel. Topalov, as he did in his match against Kramnik, wants to shift the emphasis to the middlegame, to avoid Anand's excellent preparation and also to improve his chances at getting long battles in which his superior endurance may tell.

When Anand faced Kramnik he needed to sharpen things from the start, Kramnik's solidity and defensive technique being well known. He will not feel a similar need to avoid a strategic battle against Topalov. Anand is the older player, but natural talent like his does not go stale so quickly.

That the match is taking place in Sofia is a double-edged blade. By traditional thinking it should be in Topalov's favour. He will play in familiar surroundings and receive the positive energy of his countrymen. And yet his very uneven chess in his Sofia match with Kamsky showed that playing at home can instead be a detriment if he feels additional pressure to perform.

Let us hope for a fighting match and one without embarrassing scandals. An atmosphere of respect for the game and for one another is the best way I can imagine for the players to honour the memory of Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov.

NEW IN CHESS

Garry Kasparov and Vasily Smyslov at the Armenia vs The World match in Moscow in 2002.

JUST CHECKING

NAME: **Lev Alburt**

ELO-RATING: **Inactive since 1997**

DATE OF BIRTH: **August 21, 1945**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **Orenburg, Russia**

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **New York City, USA**

What is your favourite colour?
Colour of what? I like a red wine but not a red banner.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Russian. Roasted goose, sturgeon a la Moscow...

And what drink?
A good red wine – an Amarone or Barolo.

Who is your favourite author?
Charles Krauthammer.

What was the most interesting book you ever read?
Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War.*

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Anne of the Thousand Days.

What is your favourite TV series?
The Sopranos.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Richard Burton.

And a favourite actress?
Brigitte Bardot.

What music do you like to listen to?
The sound of the ocean.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
The Russian bard Vladimir Vysotsky.

Who are the three greatest chess players of all time?
1: Capablanca; 2-5 (tie): Botvinnik, Fischer, Karpov, Kasparov.

What do you see as your best result ever?
Odessa 1974: first ahead of Stein, Tukmakov, Averbakh. Or any championship I won: Ukraine 1972, 1973, 1974; USA 1984, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990.

What was the best game you ever played?
Alburt-Polugaevsky, 1969.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Botvinnik's *100 Selected Games*. But one day, I hope, all New In Chess readers will answer this question with *Alburt's Comprehensive Chess Course*.

What are chess players particularly good at?
Probably poker, as Almira Skripchenko demonstrated by her big victory in Las Vegas.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Brilliance tempered by self-deprecating humour. (Read *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal.*)

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Failure to mind his own business.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A match-maker.

Which 3 people would you like to invite for dinner?
Czech President Vaclav Klaus (among his achievements: debunking the 'global warming' hoax); Genna Sosonko, to enliven the dinner with his wit; former Miss Russia Anna Malova, who graces the cover of my *Comprehensive Chess Course, Volume 1*.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Yes, but I love my leisure time more.

What is your greatest fear?
The (slow) Suicide of the West.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Go back to the 3-year World Championship cycle as designed in 1948; 40 moves in 2½ hours, followed by adjourning.

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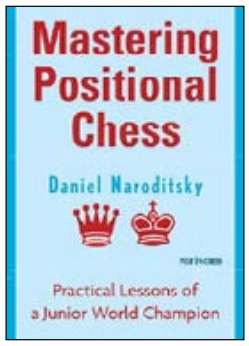

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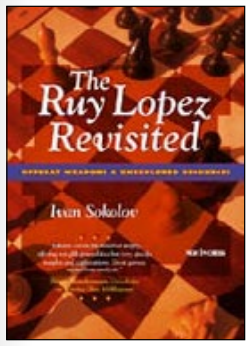

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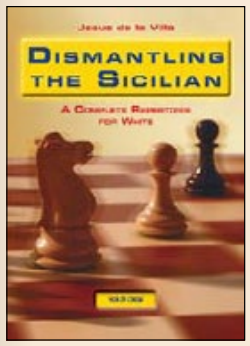

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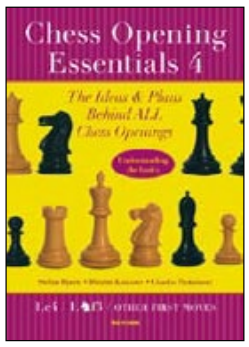

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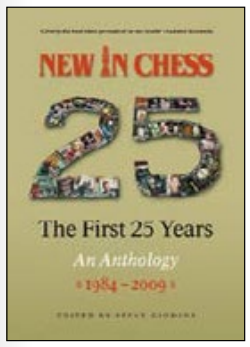

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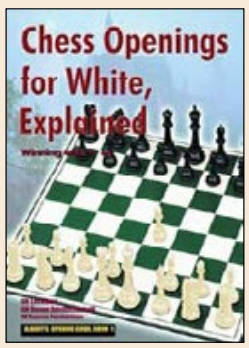

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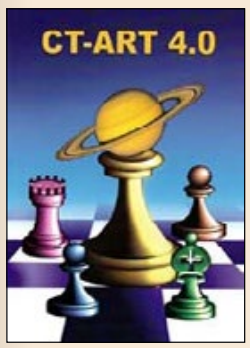

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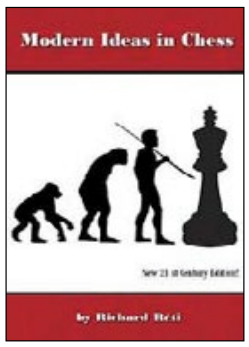

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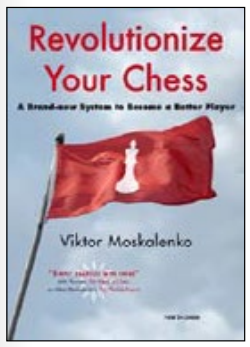

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